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Maxwell G. Burkey
Editor-in-Chief
Teaneck, New Jersey
June 2007

Forward

We congratulate our Editor-in-Chief and the contributors for the second edition of the Journal for their scholarship and commitment. In particular, we applaud our alumnus Maxwell Burkey (2006), for taking on the job of Editor-In-Chief and producing an excellent volume.

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The International Drive for Nuclear Energy and Its Environmental Repercussions

Christine Fargnoli

Introduction

Since the 1950s, the international community has discovered the benefits of using nuclear energy to power their increasing energy needs. Nuclear energy has been praised for its friendliness to the environment and reusability. This praise of nuclear energy is due, in part, over growing concern for the limits fossil fuels have, as well as the future statuses of the international environment and economies. The current fuels being used not only increase the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that lead to global warming, but are becoming more expensive and unprofitable because of the rising price of exported fuels from the Middle East turmoil.

Still, even while fervent accord among the international community has grown steadily in favor of alternative fuels, a definitive and unanimous course has not been chosen in full favor or opposition of nuclear energy use. Because of the unparalleled exposure associated with the Soviet Chernobyl disaster in 1986, as well the myriad of other nuclear contamination horror stories worldwide, the question of nuclear energy usage seems to be represented ambivalently in many forums. This paper aims to present relevant and pertinent information about the positive and negative effects of nuclear energy, historic disasters and human health issues in an unbiased, systematic way.

Positive Effects of Nuclear Energy

Nuclear energy is one of the most promising alternative energies of the present time for many reasons. First, in comparison to other energy sources, nuclear energy has the lowest impact on the environment “because nuclear plants do not emit harmful gases, require a relatively small area, and effectively mitigate other impacts.” It has also been called the “greenest” and “the most eco-efficient of all energy sources” because it produces the most electricity in relation to its very low environmental impact.

Second, nuclear energy is an emission free energy source since it does not burn anything to produce electricity, unlike other fuels that produce atmospheric gases such as carbon dioxide that contribute to the phenomenon of global warming. The water emitted from a nuclear power plant does not contain any “harmful pollutants and meets regulatory standards for temperature designed to protect aquatic life” since it “never comes in contact with radioactive materials.” The structures of nuclear power plants are thus specifically designed. In fact, since the cooling ponds surrounding the plants are ironically pure, some developers have used the areas to “provide nesting areas for waterfowl and other birds, new habitats for fish, and the preservation of other wildlife as well as trees, flowers, and grasses.” In this way, the use of nuclear power allows for further beautification of the surrounding environment.

Third, “the environmental policies and practices at nuclear power plants are unique in having successfully prevented significant harmful impacts to the environment since the start of the commercial nuclear industry more than 40 years ago.” Consequentially, the industry is the only industry since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to manage and account for nearly all of its by-product material. However, some countries have made nuclear waste management an integral part of national policy. For instance, the United States has taken ultimate responsibility and control over the disposal of used nuclear material since the inception of the commercial nuclear program in the 1950s. Still even if the efficient management of nuclear waste is disregarded in the analysis, the benefits of the low quantity of waste disposed of can be observed. The enormous difference is clear: in the United States each year, less than 20 tons of nuclear wastes are produced, while about 300,000 tons of hazardous waste is produced by all other industries.

Fourth, used nuclear waste and even nuclear weapons can be recycled to be used in a reactor again after proceeding through a re-enrichment process. “Since March 1993, 250 metric tons of uranium from weapons have been transformed into fuel for nuclear power plants,” about the “equivalent of 10,000 dismantled nuclear weapons,” as a result of the United States and the Russian Federation signing an agreement for their disposal and purchase. Because of this, one could idealistically presume that the nuclear weaponry that has weighed down the world for the better half of the twentieth century could be recycled in a peaceful, safe manner aiding and benefiting the progression of mankind.

Negative Effects of Nuclear Energy

Similar to other fuels, nuclear energy has a number of opposition forces and critics, negative drawbacks and dangers. The overwhelming concern for the safety of generating nuclear energy prevents many from providing support to nuclear programs. Further, some oppose nuclear energy because it distracts attention, support and funding away from other alternative fuels that may be more beneficial
in the long run. According to Greenpeace International, “we need an energy system that can fight climate change, based on renewable energy and energy efficiency.”

The most influential opposition forces include large environmental and conservation groups such as Greenpeace International and the Sierra Club. These organizations, although undoubtedly impartial, represent an important sector in the debate over nuclear energy as well as other alternative fuels. The consensus among such opposition forces can be summed as follows:

“We have no idea what to do with the [nuclear] wastes and our superior technology cannot rule out a Chernobyl-like disaster and has no impact on corporate incentives to pursue safety on the cheap. Moreover, [flirting] with nuclear power could slow a [budding] momentum towards conservation and alternative fuels.”

Further, “building enough nuclear power stations to make a meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions would cost trillions of dollars, create tens of thousands of tons of lethal high-level radioactive waste, contribute to further proliferation of nuclear weapons materials, and ...” 15 Some believe that there is “nothing peaceful” about nuclear energy in that the technology can be used to “obtain nuclear material useable in a nuclear weapon.”

The concern stemming from the idea that countries without a previous civil power program will eventually find themselves delving into proliferation, making tomorrow’s world progressively less safe is rational and inherent. After all, “all the countries which initially developed nuclear weapons did so before any civil power program - USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel.” 16 These organizations and other opposition deny the safety of nuclear reactors, citing that “no reactor in the world is inherently safe,” since safety flaws “cannot be eliminated by safety upgrading.” 17 “Highly radioactive spent fuel requires constant cooling, [because] if this fails, it could lead to a catastrophic release of radioactive material into the environment.” 18 Intensified safety standards and advanced, complex technology do “not give us grounds to rule out the possibility of another major disaster, even where normal engineering standards have been applied.” 19

Moreover, “nuclear power stations and reprocessing plants release small quantities of radioactive gases and iodine-131 which may also be detectable in the environment with sophisticated monitoring or analytical equipment.” 20 In this way, “steps are being taken to reduce further emissions of ... [these] radionuclides from nuclear power stations,” “even though they do not constitute a significant environmental problem.” 21

Another problem associated with nuclear power is the paradox of waste management. Though nuclear waste can be re-enriched and eventually reused to generate additional power, excess nuclear waste associated with the re-enrichment must be contained based on its radioactivity level, since release of even low radioactive material can be harmful. “Solid high-level waste from nuclear power stations is stored for 40-50 years while the radioactivity decays to less than one percent of its original level.” 22 Later it is disposed of at a great distance from anything it can cause damage to. In contrast, intermediate and low-level wastes are placed in underground containers after they are no longer needed. 23 The practice of burying nuclear waste in the ground draws strong opposition since most people do not want the material buried “in their backyard.” This response is in part associated with the lack of information regarding the treatment of nuclear waste as well as the safety procedures that follow. Still, the negative undertone related to the practice stands since “no country in the world has a solution for high-level waste that stays radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years.” 24

In addition, some other people feel that “if the nuclear industry had [more] money, there would be true madness” since nuclear technologies would become more profuse, giving human errors the possibility to do more damage. 25 With money in the nuclear industries, it becomes easier for these business structures to “try to hide all their dangerous activities from the public,” possibly causing more harm than good. 26 Fortunately and yet unfortunately, the effects of certain nuclear disasters, accidents or contaminations could not be fully disguised by industries, since the unsuspecting public would be the first to experience the potentially apocalyptic ramifications.

Disastrous Accidents

Even though nuclear energy is considered one of the most promising sources of energy in the world, many disasters that have occurred over the past three decades have helped promote the cause of opposition forces. These accidents have been viewed by the public and international community as justifiable reasons to curtail or alter the course of the nuclear industry. In almost all cases, the mishaps have aided to drive further safety measures and disaster plans.

Chernobyl

The disaster in Chernobyl, Ukraine on April 26, 1986 stands as the worst nuclear accident in all of history. The situation began when “unqualified technicians were conducting a bizarre and unnecessary experiment that, had they known the reactor’s built-in flaws, they would not have ventured.” 27 However, “the experiment spun out of control through a series of incompetent decisions, [and] every attempt to control the nuclear reaction worsened the situation, until the engineers desperately tried to reinsert the fuel rods in a last ditch bid to slow the reaction.” 28 This proved to be the last fatal error, “because the rods were constructed in a way that ended up accelerating the reaction and leading to a massive explosion.” 29 Grigory Medvedev described the scene in his book, No Breathing Room:

“About 50 tons of nuclear fuel evaporated and were released by the explosion into the atmosphere... In addition, about 70 tons were ejected sideways from the periphery of the core, mingling with a pile of structural debris, onto
the roof...and also onto the grounds of the plant...Some 50 tons of nuclear fuel and 800 tons of reactor graphite...remained in the reactor vault, where it formed a pit reminiscent of a volcanic crater.”

The fallout was disastrous particularly in Belarus, which experienced the brunt of the accident. Consequentially, “some 45,000 residents were evacuated from within a 10 km radius of the plant” whereas the 116,000 people living in the contaminated area within a 30 km radius were evacuated a few days later. “Reliable information about the accident and resulting contamination was not available to affected people for about two years following the accident...[leading] to distrust and confusion about health effects.”

Though many multi-agency reports since the accident state they “have had problems assessing the significance of their observations [on the effects of radiation on human health] because of the lack of reliable public information before 1986,” most find that health disorders are not radiation related. Still, “some 56 people were killed or subsequently died, including the 9 children from thyroid cancer...[and] among some 200,000 workers exposed during the first year, 2,200 radiation-related deaths can be expected.” “A total of the order of 4,000 eventual deaths from the accident are possible, though most scientists involved were reported to oppose publication of such a specific estimate.”

However, a study performed by Belarusian scientists in 2005 found that “radiation levels will remain high for 270 years and continue to endanger the health of local people for generations” and that “alpha radiation levels are expected to remain more than twice as high as they were immediately after the accident until 2276.” Those who are especially at risk are those in “rural communities eating contaminated mushrooms and berries.”

There are tremendous gains stemming from the disaster that shocked the international community some 20 years ago. “While no one in the West was under any illusion about the safety of early Soviet reactor designs, some lessons have also been applicable to western plants.” Today the “safety of all Soviet-designed reactors have improved vastly... due to the development of a culture of safety encouraged by an increased collaboration between East and West, and substantial investment in improving the reactors.”

After the Chernobyl accident, “an immediate international effort was launched to develop a truly ‘international safety regime’ composed of binding safety conventions, internationally accepted safety standards and a peer review system to verify the safety level of all plants.” The World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) was created by utilities operating nuclear plants “in order to maximize the safety and reliability of the operation of nuclear power plants by exchanging information and encouraging communication, comparison and emulation amongst its members.” Yet the most resounding result of Chernobyl is that,

“For many people, ‘nuclear’ and ‘radiation’ are negative words that spell the strongest positive and negative emotions. The accident at Chernobyl confirmed the worst fears of many that accidents at nuclear power stations do happen, despite what the experts told them. Emotions are not like scientific facts and they are equally real and genuinely held; [emotions], unlike scientific facts, cannot necessarily be overturned by evidence, by new ideas, or by the ‘truth.’”

### Three Mile Island

The United States has had a strong history of focusing on the negatives of nuclear energy, without thoroughly focusing on the positives. For the most part, the American people have found themselves hesitant about the fuel sources because of its association with the large disaster at Chernobyl, the smaller disaster in Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania and its relation to the atrocities caused by nuclear weaponry.

On March 28, 1979, the Three Mile Island Unit (TMI02) nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania experienced a failure in the secondary, non-nuclear section of the plant, which led to cooling water to pour out of the stuck-open valve and cause the core of the reactor to overheat. “Although the TMI-2 plant suffered a severe core meltdown, the most dangerous kind of nuclear power accident, it did not produce the worst-case consequences that reactor experts had long feared.” However, two days later new concerns arose, when “a significant release of radiation from the plant’s auxiliary building... caused a great deal of confusion and consternation.” During this time, the governor of Pennsylvania consulted with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and both “agreed that it would be prudent for those members of society most vulnerable to radiation to evacuate the area” specifically pregnant women and preschool-age children within a 5 mile radius of the plant to leave the area.

Studies conducted by the NRC, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Health and Human Services), the Department of Energy, and the State of Pennsylvania have concluded “that the average dose to about 2 million people in the area was only about 1 millirem,” a very small dose as compared to the exposure someone receiving a chest x-ray would receive, which is about 6 millirems. At the time, many “questions were raised about possible adverse effects from radiation on human, animal, and plant life in the Three Mile Island area,” though no negative effects directly linked to the accident were found.

Still, the failure at Three Mile Island has greatly impacted the American nuclear energy industry. Public fear and distrust have increased significantly since the accident, leading to broader and tougher regulations and oversight initiatives maintained by the NRC. Today, management of nuclear plants is “scrutinized more carefully” by the NRC, which has subsequently contributed to the overall reduction of risk to public health and safety.
Tokaimura

An absence of proper worker training and qualifications requirements caused Japan’s accident at Tokaimura to occur on September 30, 1999. The accident was caused by the placement of “2.4 kg of uranium powder into a 10 liter stainless steel bucket with a specialized acid and water... [which] was supposed to be controlled using a specially shaped narrow storage column tank on a one-batch basis.”

“Instead a large precipitation tank with a stirrer was used... [and] the chemical in the bucket was moved to a five liter beaker through a filter and tipped into the precipitation tank with a funnel.” Because of this, about 16.6 kg of uranium, almost six to seven normal batches, was poured into the precipitation tank that was originally made to hold 2.4 kg.

Five hours after the incident, 161 people from 39 households within a 350 meter radius from the building were evacuated, though they were allowed to return to their homes just two days later. Seven hours later after the initial evacuation, residents within 10 kilometer radius were asked to remain indoors as a precautionary procedure, while again, this restriction was lifted soon after. Any trace levels of radio nuclides detected after the accident were short lived, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team measuring the residenies, soil and vegetation near the plant found relatively normal background levels.

The largest problem associated with the Tokaimura accident is that which has “resulted primarily from human error and serious breaches of safety principles, which together led to a criticality event,” according to the IAEA. “The fact that the worker thought that it was acceptable to put 16kg of uranium into the precipitation tank because an identical quantity of uranium was put into the accumulation tower suggests that as a part of routine OSH measures, official operational procedures were not followed.” This suggests the obvious: the accident at Tokaimura was not an unavoidable occurrence. With simple and proper encouragement and reinforcement of safety procedures, training, and other qualification requirements the risk for human error can greatly be reduced.

Sellafield

It took three months for the leak at the Sellafield nuclear processing plant in Cumbria, Britain to be detected. “More than 20 tons of uranium and 160 kg of plutonium spewed onto a floor when a pipe fractured at the Thorp reprocessing complex” in January 2005, and was discovered after a camera inspection in April. “According to the British Nuclear Group’s findings, the pipe [that leaked] failed because of metal fatigue, which may have started to occur as early as August 2004.” The accident, classified as a level 3 by the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES), was relatively small in comparison to the level 7 and the level 5 incidents in Chernobyl and Three Mile Island respectively.

However Sellafield’s nuclear waste problems did not start in 2005. Since 1952, the Sellafield installation in Northwest England, which serves as an important energy producer for the people of the United Kingdom, has been dumping radioactive waste into the Irish Sea. As a consequence the “Irish Sea is now the most radioactively contaminated sea in the world” today. The fish, shellfish and other oceanic life living in the Irish Sea have been identified as having very high levels of radiation contamination, making them unsuitable for Irish fishermen to sell in market. Further, the sea’s pollution is spreading onto beaches and in people’s homes through ocean spray that turns into radioactive dust that travels and settles quickly with help from the wind.

Human Health

Contaminants appearing from nuclear power plants, refinement plants, or radioactive waste facilities likewise can have the opportunity to do some damage if proper precautionary measures are not taken. Throughout the globe, it can be seen upon simple analysis that many contaminations are caused by intentional actions performed by a state, undetected mistakes, or unfortunate accidents.

“Through mining and industrial processing naturally radioactive elements like uranium and thorium have been released into the environment [while] most of them were previously geologically isolated under layers of rock.” Further, through the advancements in nuclear technology, humans have “managed to create radioactive materials that were previously unknown in the environment.” This type of activity poses as an environmental threat to the biosphere because the spontaneous release of energy from the manipulated atoms can cause serious or even fatal problems.

“Many occupational accident statistics have been generated over the last 40 years of nuclear reactor operations in the US and UK.” The statistics show that most “radiation hazards to workers are low, and industrial accidents are few... [though] certainly nuclear power generation is not completely free of hazards... it does appear to be far safer than other forms of energy conversion.” Though the largest concern stems from the thought of radiation hazards, radiation is a weak carcinogen, meaning if a person lives next to a nuclear plant, they receive less radiation than if they were to take an airplane trip for a few hours.

The radiation protection practiced is “based on the understanding that small increases over natural levels of exposure are not likely to be harmful but should be kept to a minimum.” “So far no conclusive evidence has emerged to indicate that cancers are more frequent in radiation workers than in other people of similar ages in western countries, where cancer accounts for a quarter of all deaths.”

Still, even more concern should be placed on the effects exposure to radiation will have on those in future generations. The essential task for those in government and industry is to prevent excessive amounts of those toxins in harming people in the present time or in the future. Levels of radiation that are allowed to come into contact with the public or workers in the nuclear industry are so low
that any genetic effects or mutations that occur will be imperceptible and almost certainly non-existent. However, it is obvious that since mutations can still occur to some extent, this will give cause for alarm.

"In a plant or animal cell the material (DNA) which carries genetic information necessary to cell development, maintenance and division is the critical target for radiation. Much of the damage to DNA is repairable, but in a small proportion of cells the DNA is permanently altered. This may result in death of the cell or development of a cancer, or in the case of cells forming gonad tissue, alteration which continue as genetic changes in subsequent generations."  

Reports of increased levels of Leukemia, and thyroid cancer is an undesirable effect stemming from areas where residents have had greater contact with nuclear radiation. For instance, the ocean spray that leaves dust on resident’s houses near Sellafield has caused reports of increased rates and disproportionate rates of cancer on the eastern coast of Ireland to surface among the area’s population. Some of the residents of this town are convinced that Sellafield is the cause of an unusually high amount of leukemia cases among the children,” even though government scientists in the United Kingdom have ruled out the link between cancer and radiation from the Sellafield plant. Correspondingly, about twenty years after the Chernobyl accident, studies in the Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus based on information collected from over 1 million people affected by radiation found that 4,000 cases of thyroid cancer had been diagnosed in exposed children. Some evidence also exists that suggests there is “an increased risk of leukemia due to exposure from Chernobyl.”

Still, even more irresponsibility regarding nuclear radiation and human health lies within Russia’s borders. Since its opening in 1949, the Mayak plant in the Urals has been a source of complaint for local residents. “Local residents received the largest doses of radiation during Mayak’s first years of operation, especially during several accidents at the end of the 1950.” Before that time, the plant decided to pump its waste into the Techa River, assuming that the flowing water would dilute the waste; instead it settled into the riverbed, which eventually flowed 1,000 miles down the Ob River to the Arctic Sea. Once that problem had been discovered, the waste was deferred to Lake Karachay, which soon became hyper-contaminated, administering a lethal dose of radiation in just one hour’s time.

In 1953, Mayak’s highly-radioactive waste was moved to underground concrete-lined steel containers, one of which exploded in 1957, “contaminating a 100-mile stretch of land between Chelyabinsk and Yekaterinberg, forcing the evacuation of 10,000 and reportedly filling regional hospitals to capacity for two years.” On top of that, “waste later began to be stored in a series of unmonitored trenches stretching over a 40 square kilometer area and emitting radioactivity levels estimated at 20 times that of the Chernobyl disaster.”

**International Efforts and Organizations**

Typically, environmental issues are best viewed as an international problem rather than one that solely affects individual states. The logic behind that thinking is simple: the environment does not have true borders; the effects of one state’s decisions, good or bad, will have an impact on the environment of another state.

**IAEA**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was founded in 1957 as an independent, intergovernmental organization within the United Nations system, headquartered in Vienna. The organization promotes safeguards and verification, safety and security, as well as science and technology, that all contribute to the overall goals of international peace, security, and the World’s Millennium Goals for social, economic, and environmental development.

While the assessment of nuclear power plant safety is the responsibility of the national authorities each particular state, the IAEA involves itself in the investigation of abnormal events or accidents that are registered by a member state. However the IAEA’s “regular program puts considerable effort into developing standards for all safety thematic areas and for all types of nuclear installations” as part of their Safety Standards and Safety Guides. The IAEA also provides other tools and services that promote the communication of information on abnormal events, such as the Incident Report System (IRS) and the Agency peer review service that creates the opportunity for Member States to share lessons and learn from each other. The Agency also promotes “self-sustaining networks within and between Member States based on strategic knowledge management to provide more opportunities to share safety information.”

**Conclusion**

While the world seems ready to accept an alternate source of energy besides fossil fuels, there is no true consensus on what that choice will ultimately be. Some see the path leading directly to the use of nuclear energy, while others find the drawbacks of using the fuel to be endless. Still, it is obvious that change is necessary.

It seems that while nuclear energy is largely abundant, relatively safe, and generally easy to produce, there is always an underlying fear that sits in the hearts and minds of mankind. Whether that stems from the tension and uncertainty of the present time, or the word “nuclear” itself, it seems proper to utilize the time and resources to educate the public about what nuclear energy truly is and how it could potentially alter our energy future.
Upon analysis, one may also find that the most challenging part of nuclear power and the area where the most problems occur is not with the equipment or technology associated with the energy, but the absence of proper disaster prevention training and poor decision making on behalf of plant workers. These two key elements that cause accidents, disasters and leaks to occur also occur with other energy sources, and thankfully, are solvable problems. However, if humans treat it lackadaisically and do not take particular care to what happens to nuclear plants, byproducts or the area around the plant, then accidents, leaks, and increased levels of radiation can occur on Earth.

In part, nuclear power has helped the international community change the way it views problems. A state may look to the international community for assistance during times of need, or it may force a state to consider the international ramifications of its actions when it does things that may alter the environment. “Prior to the Chernobyl accident, transboundary health threats were largely ignored by states and treated hypothetically.” Afterward, the international community and nuclear industry reacted with the wide recognition that “an accident anywhere is an accident everywhere.”

Endnotes


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The United Nations’ Hunger Crusade

Daniel Suh

Introduction

Since humans gave up their nomadic lifestyle and began the domestication and cultivation of land about 12,000 years ago, the world has witnessed an agricultural evolution that continues to this date.¹ During this process, the global population has increased dramatically, astounding technologies have been invented to aid both the production and consumption of resources, and different social, political and environmental scenarios have impacted man’s ability to feed himself. However, the current problems of global food shortages and malnutrition have become a surprising emergency in a world that is more materially abundant than ever in history.

Currently, “852 million people in the world do not have enough to eat—more than the populations of USA, Canada and the European Union.”² Of this hungry mass of 852 million, 815 million live in developing countries, and one in every three hungry person lives in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, hunger and malnutrition are the primary risk to global health, more so than AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis combined. With the disparity of income and elevated food costs that exist in developing parts of the world, poor families must spend over 70% of their income on food for sustenance, while an average American family spends about 10%. The notable fact here is that “world hunger is extensive in spite of sufficient global food resources . . . that people are too poor to buy readily available food.”³

Although the world’s food production and supply levels are sufficient enough to provide each human being with 3,500 calories a day—at least 4.3 pounds of food per person daily—about 24,000 people die from the effects of hunger each day, at a rate of one person every 3.5 seconds.⁴ Moreover, malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60% of children’s death in developing countries each year (Hunger Facts). According to the United Nations Development Program estimates, “basic health and nutrition needs of the world’s poorest people could be met for an additional $13 billion a year.”⁵ In more relevant terms, while the public expenditures in Europe and the United States for 1998 on perfumes were $12 billion and $17 billion on pet foods, millions in the world continue to face the plight of hunger.⁶

Aside from the immediate physical impacts, the problems of food shortages and malnutrition also have social, economical and political implications. Undernourishment negatively affects people’s health, and, therefore, directly impacts their productivity and sense of hope in their respective societies and governments. Economically, the constant need and worry to secure food consumes valuable time and energy of the poor people, allowing less time for work and earning income. Further, the combination of the erosion of social relationships and citizens’ faith in their governments leads to political instability in the already unstable countries of the developing sector. Droughts or floods, armed conflict, and political, social and economic disruptions all contribute to the cycle of global hunger that refuses to improve significantly. Economists and sociologists have gone so far as to describe most countries of Africa, South Asia, and Latin America as being “a poverty trap,” wherein these poor countries, lacking the basic investments necessary for economic growth, are too poor to afford the daily essentials, and, thus, cannot break out of poverty without resources from abroad.⁷

To combat the seemingly unsolvable problem of global hunger, two organizations have been established within the United Nations. The FAO, Food and Agricultural Organization, was founded in 1945 and serves as a neutral forum for all nations to meet and negotiate agreements and debate policy in regards to world hunger.⁸ Another important role of the FAO is to aid developing countries to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, and ensure good nutrition for all. The second organization within the U.N. to lead the struggle against global hunger is the WFP, World Food Programme. WFP began operations in 1962 when several global emergencies occurred—an earthquake hit Iran in September of 1962, followed by a hurricane in Thailand in October, and a newly independent Algeria was resettling 5 million refugees.⁹ WFP is the direct food aid arm of the UN and uses its resources to meet emergency needs and support economic and social development wherever needed. During its short history, WFP has targeted specific instances of natural disasters, displaced people, and perpetual hunger.

Statistics of global hunger and malnutrition are staggering and obviously reflect a severe problem that must be rectified. And although the United Nations, numerous governments, and a growing number of non-governmental organizations are working assiduously to ameliorate this issue, the predicament of food shortages and malnutrition in the world persists. However, given the fact that the global society fully possesses the capacity to eradicate worldwide hunger in a short period of time, the United Nations may achieve the goal of ensuring that all people are properly nourished by improving its political resolve and more directly addressing the objectives.
Regional Scenarios of Hunger and Malnutrition

Africa

Of all the regions in the world, Africa’s situation is the most severe with respect to the problems of hunger and malnutrition. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimated that from 1997-1999 the Sub-Saharan region of Africa had the highest proportion of undernourished at 34% of its population. This statistic only reveals the average percentage of those that are hungry in this region. More specifically, Central Africa currently ranks highest in the world with 51% of its population hungry or undernourished, followed by East Africa and Southern Africa, both at 43%. Of the 113 million people assisted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2004, 35% (39 million) of the total WFP beneficiaries were in Africa. The hunger crisis in Africa, which exceeds far beyond that of any other regions, can be attributed to several key issues.

One of the chief causes of hunger and malnutrition in Africa can be found in the fact that they were bypassed by the Green Revolution of the 1970s and 1980s. Winner of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize, Norman Earnest Borlaug headed an international effort to eliminate hunger by improving crop performance. The Green Revolution movement succeeded in developing new agricultural methods and technologies in irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, mechanization, and higher-yield crop cultivars. More importantly, these discoveries were transferred to many developing countries, with the largest impact being in India and China, and helped to ignite the big push in agriculture that allowed many parts of the developing world to escape the trap of extreme poverty, disease and famine. However, Africa never experienced the monumental Green Revolution that could perhaps have altered its history, and as a result, three numbers reflect the dismal aftermath. First, food production per capita in Africa decreased by 7% between 1980 and 2000. This is in contrast to the 28% increase in food production in India over the same period, and 82% increase in China. Second, fertilizer use in Africa was 23 kilograms per hectare in 2002, compared with 100 kg in India and 278 kg in China. Third, as a result, grain yields in 2003 averaged 1.6 tons of maize per hectare in Africa, compared to an average of 3.8 tons in Asia. Due to the lack of knowledge of agricultural science, necessary investments to improve rural infrastructure, and reliable irrigation and water systems, Africa remains the hungriest continent in the world.

A 2001 assessment by the FAO of the world food security situation revealed that civil strife and political instability, compounded with the already unproductive agricultural conditions due to droughts and lack of economic resources, plagued nearly all countries in Africa. The Mengistu government of Ethiopia starved the opposition, then used food aid and resources strategically to remove and forcibly resettled the opposing populations. In southern Sudan, government and rebel forces have resorted to using food as an instrument of selective ethnic and religious oppression by fighting to commandeer the food supply. The cyclical trends of ethnic and tribal warfare, military coups, and civil wars have created refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons, all who are politically powerless or economically destitute and cannot get access to food even where it is available. Conflicts result in the people’s losing or abandoning their essential assets, including tools, livestock, jewelry, and land. Moreover, whatever assets the refugees and displaced people retain are parlayed into food to meet immediate nutritional needs, and as a result, people find themselves without further resources. Hence, food shortages related to conflicts can be characterized as entitlement failures and artificial conditions of chronic food insecurity that otherwise may have been temporary or seasonal shortage of food.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The World Food Programme reports that more than 62 million people, 14% of the 516 million Latin American and Caribbean people, suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Within the region, hunger and malnutrition affect both rural and urban areas and are most acute in Central America, Haiti, Argentina, Colombia and Peru. In Guatemala, the severe drought of 2001 wiped out harvests, and 60,000 children were severely malnourished, while 6,000 were in danger of dying of hunger, while in Colombia and Peru, 25% of the population suffers from hunger. However, WFP’s efforts to initiate an emergency plan in Central America has been hampered by the fact that is has only received one-third of the funds pledged by the international community. Although under-funded and shorthanded, in April 2002, the WFP launched an emergency feeding program in Guatemala, where 31,000 families lost their harvest and 47% of children under five years of age were being affected by chronic malnutrition.

During the recent years, one severe hurricane after another has hit the regions of Central America and the Caribbean and hindered the agricultural industries from properly recuperating. Furthermore, earthquakes and mudslides have also impacted the poverty-stricken region and have brought on prolonged periods of drought. The WFP also speculates that new climate changes can be seen in the region, largely due to the series of El Niño, a current that originates in Australia every three to seven years and warms the waters of the Pacific Ocean. This natural phenomenon has resulted in a lack of rain along Central America’s Pacific coast, where the region’s major cities are located, and excessive rainfall in the Caribbean. As a result, hunger and malnutrition most harshly affects the poor peasant farmers who lost their crops to droughts that swept the area along the Pacific coast, causing more than $189 million in losses during 2005 for Central America. In Nicaragua and Guatemala, the problem of food shortages is increasing as poverty levels have skyrocketed to affect nearly 80% of the population. As the trend indicates, “the environmental impact of the recent disasters will only worsen the long term economic picture.”

The UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) states that “despite the fact that almost 55 million people of Latin America and the Caribbean, 11% of the population, suffered from some degree of malnutrition in 200, during the past decade
this rate fell in 20 of 24 countries, thanks to the availability of food and the decline of extreme poverty.”

Arising out of the study’s analysis is the fact that the problem of hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean does not reflect a lack of food supply, as much as the insufficient access due to the people’s low income. According to the same ECLAC study of 2002, an estimated 220 million people (43.4%) Latin Americans were living in poverty, of which 95 million (18.8%) were indigent. The worsening of economic inequalities and falling prices for certain export products like coffee and sugar have crippled the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean. Because countries in this region rely heavily on the export of their raw products for revenues, when prices of finished and manufactured goods steadily rise while the prices of raw materials remain the same or decline, they face tremendous trade deficits and find themselves unable to buy sufficient amounts of food and other essential goods. WFP spokesperson Jordan Dey reveals that severe and chronic hunger “is not simply a matter of bad geographical luck; it is also a matter of justice, a structural problem rooted in a system that maintains the inequitable distribution of productive resources and of income.” More specifically, it is a system within which wealthy countries hold absolute power over the global market, in this case the interests of agricultural producers of the developing countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, at the expense of the tens of millions of people who are hungry every day.

**East and South Asia**

Asia is the largest continent in the world, in landmass as well as population size. Of the slightly over 3 billion people living in Asia, the FAO estimates that over 500 million are undernourished, most of them being in China and India. Since China and India have the greatest populations in Asia and in the world, a closer examination is necessary. FAO’s assessment of the proportion of undernourished people in Asia for 2000 shows polarities within the region with respect to this issue. While South Korea and Japan had negligible proportions of their population that were hungry, Cambodia and Mongolia had the highest proportions at more than 35%, followed by India, Laos and the Philippines at 20-35%. China was at the lower end of the spectrum with only 5-20% of its population experiencing hunger and malnutrition. Hence, additional statistics reveal specific pockets within the region that are more severely affected by food shortages.

Although the extent of hunger in Asia as a whole, according to Nitin Desai, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in 2001, has decreased over the past 20 years from 32% of the population in 1980 to about 17% in 1998, specific countries still retain high levels of hunger and malnutrition within their populations. Almost 70% of 23.3 million people living in Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) live on half of the minimum daily energy requirements, followed by 47% of Laos are battling chronic hunger and malnutrition, as well as 33% of Bangladesh, and 23% of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. As aforementioned, countries like China, South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan and Thailand experienced rapid progress in agriculture and the highest reduction in rural poverty, largely due to the Green Revolution. However, the reformation of agricultural technologies and rural economics has not been uniform in Asia as several implications of hunger indicate as follows.

A major factor for chronic hunger and malnutrition lies within the imbalance of human development and economic reform. As the economies of Asian countries have begun to shift into manufacturing and technological sectors, the share of agriculture in the national incomes (GDPs) have gradually declined to a current an average of 20-30%. Although agriculture continues to contribute less and less to the GDP, the percentage of the population depending on agriculture remains between 50-60% in many countries of Asia. Hence, the imbalances between human development, economic reform, and social reform lead to inefficiency, where the value of agricultural production and its labor productivity level can only be low. This polarity and inefficiency are direct results of the inability of the region’s large population to keep pace with the rapid development of the Asian economy over the last fifteen years. Furthermore, the liberalization of trade has exacerbated the polarity between production and income in Asia. Although Asian countries have a significant comparative advantage in agricultural products, the explosive population increases have produced a low ratio of land to labor and decreased what was once an absolute advantage. Additionally, the combination of liberalization’s requirement to remove subsidies and the markets’ shift from income-inelastic foods such as wheat and rice to income-elastic sources of meats, fruits and vegetables have simultaneously increased agricultural input prices and lowered the real incomes for producers. As the Asian economic crisis of the mid 1990s prove, globalization, trade liberalization, and free-flowing exchange markets are not entirely beneficial and can lead to millions being stranded in poverty and facing chronic hunger and malnutrition.

In the recent years, natural disasters have also played a significant role in causing food shortages in Asia. Several hurricanes, floods, and the most recent tsunami in the areas around the Indian Ocean resulted in emergency situations where millions of people required food assistance. In Sri Lanka alone, the WFP reported 850,000 people needing food aid, of which it was able to help 750,000. Moreover, in Indonesia, WFP assisted 425,000 of the 790,000 people requiring emergency food aid as a result of the tsunami. As if the tsunami were not devastating enough, the annual monsoon season in Bangladesh during 2004 led to water levels that reached epic proportions, with more than 70% of the country submerged. Because Bangladesh has always been prone to flash floods, the country’s agricultural industry, essentially the food supply, remains vulnerable. In 2004 alone, over 20 million people in Bangladesh were in need of food assistance, of which WFP was only able to reach 8.3 million due to the severe under-funding of the emergency operation. Due to the combination of multiple environmental, social, and economical reasons, Asiad received 26.4%, the second largest after Africa, of WFP’s total global food aid in 2004. As most of Asia is still undergoing significant developmental changes, the problem of food shortages and malnutrition for the population will only be alleviated over time and through a considerably focused and collabo-rated effort.
Middle East

The Middle East region is often only associated with endless deserts, primitive ways of life, and religious conflicts between the Muslims, Jews and Christians. Surprisingly enough, however, WFP reports that as of 2003, the Middle East faced minimal problems of food shortages and malnutrition in comparison to other regions. In fact, just 2.5 to 4% of the Middle East’s population was undernourished, second only to North America and Europe, which on average had 2.5% or less of their populations that was undernourished. In concurrence with these statistics, the World Bank estimated in 2000 that only 10% of children in the Middle East were underweight for their age. However, the numbers are minimal only when compared to more severe regions of the world and still reflect a disturbing number of people that are afflicted with chronic hunger and malnutrition. In 2004, the Middle East received 8% of global food aid provided by WFP, a figure that is only slightly less than the 8.7% given to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Within the region that has a seemingly insignificant problem of hunger, several countries’ situations of food shortages appear unsettling. The approximate 39 million people who do not have enough to eat in the Middle East can be mainly designated to the following countries: 30% of Yemen, 14% of Oman, 10% of Jordan, 10% of Turkey, 9% of Lebanon, and 7% of United Arab Emirates. Middle Eastern countries, once relatively buffered from the problems of hunger and malnutrition, have experienced stagnant economical development in recent years as well as political and military calamities. Turkey’s dismal economic growth patterns and internal political disputes, including those with its neighbors such as Cyprus and Greece, have compelled Turkey to seek acceptance into the European Union. The hopes of Turkey are that a membership within the E.U. will help the country to develop economically and alleviate social issues such as hunger and malnutrition. To the east, Lebanon’s hunger problem founds itself in the internal political instability, religious fundamentalism, and continuing political and military pressures of Syria. Jordan’s dispute with Israel over borders and water resources and the resulting fundamentalist policies play huge roles in diverting its inability and resources to feed the population.

However, the most alarming development in the Middle East with respect to hunger and malnutrition arises out of Iraq. During his address at the UN’s annual Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Jean Ziegler, a UN specialist on hunger, reported that “malnutrition rates in children under five have almost doubled since the US-led invasion to nearly 8%”—a stark contrast to the 4% of the hungry Iraqi children under Saddam Hussein’s regime. With the ousting of Saddam, Iraq was left in shambles—completely devoid of reliable infrastructure, medical care, food supplies, legitimate commerce, and social services. As the American occupation became longer than initially planned with results of rebuilding Iraq being far below expectations, the citizens, primarily the women and children, suffer through the chronic condition of hunger. On the other hand, without the numerous complications such as the environmental disasters, diseases, and civil wars plaguing Africa, the problem of food shortages and malnutrition in the Middle East should more easily be alleviated with proper aid and policy implementation.

North America and Europe

Much of the world envies the life of apparent affluence in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe. The notion is that everyone living in these regions live in excess and do not care enough for the rest of the world that is in need. Although there exists some truth to these popular beliefs, hunger is a relevant issue even in the developed part of North America and Europe. Contrary to common assumptions, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eastern Europe and Baltic states, received 6.1% of WFP’s global food aid in 2004, almost par with assistance provided to Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East. Furthermore, unlike the other regions, Europe receipt of aid from the WFP has consistently been solely for emergency relief of food shortages and none for development. The WFP currently estimates that 5-19% of Eastern Europe and CIS are undernourished.

The particular European countries most severely affected by hunger are Albania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Montenegro. According to an UN report published in October 2003, “31.6% of the world’s urban populations lives in slums and 6.2% of them live in Europe.” Post-Communist countries of Europe are slowly trying to rebuild their economies since the collapse of socialist governance and policies. However, the laborious process of adapting to a free-market system and democratic form of government is taking a toll on the population. For example, 2 million children in Poland, 39% of the children in Albania, 21% of the children in Bulgaria, and 52% of the children of Romania do not have enough to eat and are undernourished. As of now, the solution to hunger and malnutrition in Europe appears to depend on the European Union’s expansion in membership, growth in economic stability and strength, and collective effort.

In North America, numbers indicate that the problems of hunger and malnutrition considerably impact the populations of the U.S. and Canada, which are two of the most developed countries in the world. “Data analysis by the Children’s Defense Fund indicates that full-time work at minimum wage does not guarantee escape from poverty” in the U.S. Of the approximate 280 Americans, 34 million are exposed to the threat of hunger and 11 million actually experience hunger each year. Attempts on welfare reform have not been successful in alleviating the hunger and poverty needs of certain Americans. In fact, a recent research by Tuft University shows that 35 states have implemented social and welfare policies that will actually worsen the situation of current poor families, including their ability to satisfy their hunger. It is a rather sobering fact when the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports hunger in America has risen by 43% since 2000, an additional 7 million hungry people. With respect to the household food security in the U.S., the same USDA report in 2004 reveals that 38.2 million Americans live in households that suffer directly from hunger and food security, including nearly 14 million children. This increase of food insecurity contradicts the end of a recession in America, which should have lessened the number of hungry people. Because the level of chronic hunger is rising while the economy is improving, one can only deduce the hunger
phenomenon in America to be a man-made problem. More specifically, the thriving American economy and job market appear to be benefiting only a small and select portion of the population—those who belong to the upper middle class and above—and widening income inequality and lessening the purchase power, vis-à-vis the majority of Americans whose wages are barely sufficient or even inadequate for proper sustenance. The prosperity of the U.S. seems hollow by the fact that rates of hunger increased in almost every single category of household, from that of single mothers to that of people living in or near poverty. In a country of such material abundance, this artificial scenario of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty can be easily remedied through the proper redistribution of income and improved social services.

As Canada remains generally unpublicized by the media, the rest of the world may assume that the status quo of the issues of hunger and malnutrition in Canada remains satisfactory. However, recent numbers reveal a situation that is contrary to popular belief. In 2001, about 2.5 million Canadians, including thousands of middle class families, had problems putting food on the table at some point between 1998 and 1999. Despite the title of “the best country in the world to live” given to Canada by the United Nations Development Programme, studies found that 1.6% of Canadian families with children under the age of 12 were experiencing hunger in 1996. Although the reported hunger cases in Canada are not a rampant situation or an everyday event, the 8% of Canadians reporting food insecurity reflects an inherent problem of capitalism. Instead of allocating food and funds to those who are hungry, the capitalist system, like that of Canada and the U.S., allocates the resources to those who have the money to pay for it. Because capitalism treats food as a commodity, like other things for sale, food becomes a measure of profits rather than of decent living. Canada, as most countries in the world, faces the problem of adjusting domestic policies to balance out the effects of globalization of economies and markets. When minimum wages remain relatively stagnant, welfare payments are slashed, and inflation occurs, people cannot buy ample amount of food to adequately meet the recommended nutritional values, let alone properly provide for an entire family. As global economies and politics continue to evolve, Canada will need to better adjust its social and economic policies in order to ensure food security for its population.

Issues of United Nations’ Aid Programs

Objectives, Efficiency, and Effectiveness

The United Nations set its lofty Millennium Development Goals at the Millennium Summit to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people in the world whose income is less than one dollar a day and who suffer from hunger. Although rapid progress is taking place in Asia and Europe, the projected growth rates predict that in 2015, 314 million people of Sub-Saharan Africa will remain hungry and in abject poverty. This disparity in growth can be attributed to the intricacies of political, social, and economical problems that underlie the issue of hunger and malnutrition. To properly resolve the issue of hunger, not only food aid but also a multilateral approach is needed in the forms of assistance for social, economical, agricultural, and political reforms. The development mantra of producing more food to feed more people needs to give way to a new call: create more jobs and provide income to buy food. As already established by the WFP, the world’s food production has expanded faster than its population over the last 35 years and is capable of providing 2,800 calories to every person, 700 more calories than the current WFP’s aim of 2,100. Hence, the numbers and facts clearly show that the scarcity of food is not the cause of global hunger, but rather the lack of resources to acquire food.

Moreover, plans to reach more people with more food are irrational and unlikely to be able to solve the problem of hunger and malnutrition. Such an objective to simply hand out food surpluses to every single hungry person in the world is virtually impossible because of the cost and complexity of distribution. Aside from the logistical constraints, an agenda that primarily utilizes food aid can turn recipients into permanent dependents of the world. Furthermore, providing only the means for sustenance will turn people into beggars and, as a result, will not help the poor and hungry to self-actualize and aspire for greater opportunities. Instead, food aid should be considered a temporary form of assistance, while solutions are sought in permanent development projects, such as the building of infrastructure that can foster economic activity for the rural poor and connect them to markets and urban areas for the sale of their products. Furthermore, a focus should be placed on the education of children, who will play a key role in revitalizing the future economies and technological advances with their knowledge.

Despite the incredibly complex nature of the global hunger problem, the different branches and organizations of the United Nations often find themselves with separate agendas and hierarchies that conflict with one another and, as a result, create internal inefficiencies to dealing with the issue at hand. Additionally, the fact that thousands of independent NGOs around the world are essentially trying to solve the same hunger problem wherever the U.N. has failed to alleviate it only dilutes the effort to eradicate global hunger and malnutrition. Just as a small local creek that cannot generate the same power hydroelectrically as the massive Mississippi River, the fragmented pieces of efforts lack the inherent potential competence to satisfy world hunger on their own. Therefore, the U.N. needs to further integrate its own organizations, such as the Economic and Social Council, WFP, FAO and other development committees, assimilate NGOs with similar agendas, streamline and share resources and information with private NGOs, and formulate a multilateral, yet more focused, approach to eliminate global hunger. With the status quo, the WFP faces limitations in resolving the hunger problem when it is primarily only providing food aid, and the FAO cannot push forward with its reformation of agricultural industries and technologies while millions are suffering and even dying from hunger. Similarly, the development efforts of the Economic and Social Council to reform the different sectors of developing countries are hindered by the cyclical and basic problem of hunger. However, with a unified approach that is more organized and extensive in terms of resources, a revamped United Nations will be more successful in its battle against hunger and malnutrition.
A merger of organizations will strengthen the U.N.’s role in the campaign against global hunger and greatly enhance the effectiveness of its policies. As WFP’s agency chief James Morris states, “Clearly, no single organization can solve world hunger.” Furthermore, because the U.N. is not a governing body that can stridently hold accountable the countries that shirk their responsibilities to contribute funds and/or resources, much of its policy proposals and agendas fall short of being consummated. The individual countries’ lack of political will to either resolve their own hunger problems themselves or be a contributing factor of the U.N.’s efforts poses as a serious bureaucratic challenge, with the most obvious indicator being the severe shortage of funding. Currently, the international community’s relatively weak commitments seriously undermine the U.N.’s struggle against hunger. However, with the coalition of U.N.’s organizations and NGOs, a stronger resolution will emerge to present the United Nations with more political authority and influence, hopefully along with a more dependable resource base, to more effectively execute its programs for eradicating global hunger and malnutrition.

Safety and Security

Of all the logistics involved in the implementation of a food assistance mission, concerns over safety and security have become major factors to be assessed. The importance of safety and security issues in providing food aid most violently manifested itself during the U.N.’s failure to successfully deliver food aid to recipients in Somalia. At the height of Somalia’s internal conflicts in 1992, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated that one-third of Somalia’s 4.5 million people were expected to die from hunger within six months. The statistics at that time also reflected at least 75% of Somalians who were afflicted with severe malnutrition. In terms of general malnutrition, nearly 95% of Somalians were afflicted. Nevertheless, fighting within Somalia continued while its population persisted to starve to death. The limited U.N. food aid that was provided initially frequently did not reach the intended recipients. Soldiers of different warlords hijacked the food cargos while the convoys were en route to their destinations. Besides the loss of food aid during these encounters, without a sizable humanitarian escort force, the U.N. relief workers and the food resources faced tremendous security risks. In the war-torn country of Somalia, the opposing sides of the conflict targeted the U.N.’s relief workers and food shipments for they represented immediate sources of food and political leverage.

Despite several resolutions by the U.N.’s Security Council to send a Special Envoy, essentially to play the role of a peacekeeping force that would protect the U.N.’s relief workers, only a modest proposal for 50 unarmed U.N. monitors was agreed upon. After the successful deployment of the 50 unarmed observers, the U.N. eventually accepted a plan to send 300 peacekeepers to Somalia. However, due to the outstanding security problems in Somalia, the U.N. could not provide any food aid during the span of almost 7 months until the deployment of peacekeepers. Experts within the U.N. criticized the slow response to provide a minimal security force which and asserted that a force of 6,000 or more was actually needed to properly protect the relief efforts. The criticisms became a reality when the small deployment of security force continued to be highly ineffective in permitting relief supplies to move into and within Somalia. When the United States finally intervened with its own military support, only to face fierce resistance and heavy casualties, both the U.N. and the American strategies to provide assistance in Somalia became highly publicized and were scrutinized for their miscalculations of the security risks. Even after the failed missions, the lack of security for relief workers remains as made evident by the gunmen’s ambushing of an U.N. aid convoy in Baidoa, Somalia just two weeks ago. Incidents such as these confirm that increased efforts by the U.N. and recipient countries are required to protect humanitarian workers and ensure that aid reaches those who need it.

The failed food aid mission in Somalia remains as a grave reminder of the fact that the safety and security of U.N. workers and relief supplies are of utmost importance, not only for the sake of the workers’ lives and money invested but also for the success of the mission to save lives. At the same time, a country must maintain internal security in order for it to eradicate food shortage and malnutrition problems. When there is civil unrest or warfare within a state, displaced people and refugees, destroyed infrastructure, abandoned and/or damaged farmlands and equipments, and no sources of income all contribute to the creation of chronic and widespread hunger and malnutrition. Hence, with such instability and threat of safety, proper aid cannot be administered without significant risk and additional resources that are better utilized elsewhere. Besides, even if the food aid were to be delivered, the possibilities that there are no guarantees that the food will be distributed to those who actually need it and that the food will not be stolen away from the citizens by armed parties undermine the entire project. Since providing aid requires a bilateral effort with respect to the safety and security of both the donor and recipient, a failure of either party to preserve its own security creates complications in the aid process. Furthermore, because the United Nations is a highly politicized organization that largely operates on the voluntary contributions of its members, security concerns must be more carefully assessed and adequately addressed in order for it to gain the necessary political and financial support to carry out future aid missions.

Sustainability

Although members of the United Nations always seek refuge and responsibility from the organization, many countries shirk their own obligations when it comes to providing funds to resolve the very problems they complain about. In 2003, WFP was $600 million short of its $4.3 billion budget, which in itself is $13 billion shy of what is required to properly aid those who suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition. With such lack of resources, the U.N. cannot sustain adequate levels of aid, let alone solve the problem of hunger completely. However, examples of countries’ cutting back on promised responsibilities underline the largest obstacle—lack of funds—that the United Nations faces in trying to be more effective in providing aid and be able to sustain adequate levels of assistance. It has been some 35 years since the donor governments promised at an U.N. general assembly meeting to spend at least 0.7% of its gross national product on official development assistance. However, almost all rich nations have constantly failed to reach their agreed obligations of the 0.7%, and instead have provided around 0.2% to 0.4%, with the difference totaling to about $100 billion. Although the interna-
tional community promised the WFP $105 million in 1999 to provide food aid to Angola, which was experiencing a civil war, only $45.15 million has been released to date.\textsuperscript{e} In 2005, Secretary General, Kofi Annan, pleaded to the member states by pointing out that in 1992, donors pledged $880 million for the relief program in Cambodia and only delivered $460 million, and that in 2003, only 20% of the promised $1 billion was delivered to provide aid in Bam, Iran for the aftermath of its earthquake.\textsuperscript{f}

More specifically in regards to the financing of food assistance, the aforementioned trend of irresolute commitments also plays a major role. In 2001, 10.98 million tons of food aid was provided worldwide by WFP, while in 2004, only 7.5 millions tons of aid was provided.\textsuperscript{g} The implications of this decreasing amount of aid are that not enough funds are being provided to finance the projects and the under-funded programs are not being effective enough to attract more donors. Another notable aspect of the problem of financing is the inverse proportion of funds given by countries. For example, although the U.S., Japan, U.K., France, and Germany are consistently the largest contributors to the WFP, none of their assistances exceed 0.4% of respective GNP.\textsuperscript{h} On the contrary, Norway, Sweden, Luxemborg, Netherlands, and Denmark contribute less in terms of total amount, but all of them contribute between 0.8% and 0.9% of their respective GNP. Consequently, the U.N. faces a paradox in which the richest countries continue to be tightfisted with their moneybags, while the less fortunate ones are going above and beyond what is asked of them. This illogically lopsided and inconsistent scenario of contributions, coupled with the U.N.'s lack of political power to enforce consequences as previously mentioned, continue to make the sustainability of food aid programs difficult.

Policy Recommendations

As the various organizations within the U.N. pursue different strategies to resolve their respective social, political, and economic agendas, no synergy exists to bind these separate bodies, even though their objectives are all essentially the same—to ensure peace, security, and well being for all mankind. For the international community to recognize it as a more compelling and authoritative figure in its campaign against hunger and malnutrition, the U.N. should strengthen the partnerships of different developmental organizations within the U.N., as well as its relationships with reputable NGOs with similar agendas. Larger networks of cooperation will not only give the U.N. access to more resources, but also the opportunity to perhaps mitigate the bureaucracy and greed for glory that regularly dilute the overall objectives. Furthermore, in contrast to the U.N. which is often hampered by excessive regulations and voting procedures, the private sector of NGOs and corporate sponsors have traditionally proven to be more agile in terms of operation and policies. Therefore, an alliance between the U.N. and the private sector should lend the U.N. with the greater flexibility it needs to more effectively carry out its campaign against global hunger and malnutrition.

In the real world, no matter how strong the will or great the ideal, without sufficient funding the U.N. will never be able to substantially reduce the levels of hunger in the world. Given the fact that financial commitments fall short every year, the U.N. should take a more aggressive approach by securing each donor’s commitments in the form of a contract. To prevent the possible retraction of original agreements, the breach of this contract should subject a country to a schedule of fines, depending on the type and frequency of violation. A binding contract with consequences if it is not fulfilled should increase the member states’ accountability to “walk the talk,” and at the same time, decrease the instances of sudden shortage of funds during the assistance programs, ensuring more stability to the flow of aid.

The unilateral approach of providing food aid to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the world has proven to be shortsighted and unsuccessful. Educational, technological and economic reforms should all be part of the aid package provided to a country that is suffering from hunger and malnutrition. As aforementioned, the integration of organizations will facilitate the implementation of this multilateral approach. Because the inherent problem of hunger and malnutrition lies in the lack of income and not in the shortage of food supply, the U.N. should make it a priority to rectify an unjust global market system. Currently, the developed countries discriminate against the products from developing countries through their use of subsidies and exploit the developing countries for their cheap raw materials without ever investing for the growth of those countries. The U.N. can aim to permanently solve the problem of hunger and malnutrition by encouraging the global community to fully open their markets without unfair competition, to invest a small percentage of profits made overseas in the reformation and nation-building processes of the countries in which they conduct business, and to consider the necessity of improvement in other sectors when providing food assistance.

To ensure that its finances and other resources are being fully maximized, in terms of their expenditures on food and equipment purchases, transport fees, and wages paid to workers, the U.N. should incorporate a system of more frequent and thorough business process review. By more closely monitoring the business aspect of its food aid program and reevaluating operational logistics, the U.N. can look for more efficient and cost effective means to operate on its constrained budget. Review of operations can also help to improve the allocation of resources to organizations within the U.N. and outside like the NGOs that can better utilize the provisions. Furthermore, a more sensible fiscal policy and frugal handling of its daily business transaction should enable the U.N. to offer more food aid to where it is most needed and to improve the sustainability of its assistance programs.

When faced with a new incident that requires food aid, the U.N. should better assess the current status of the situation and the viable courses of action before implementing its relief program. Improved evaluation of the issue at hand can help the U.N. to avoid situations of miscalculations, such as the decision to put into action an emergency relief program when a long-term plan should have been pursued. Engaging in the most appropriate aid program from the onset should deliver more effective results. Furthermore, the closer eval-
uation and planning will allow the U.N. to better calculate the amount of needed funds, relief workers, security force, and other resources. The improvement of initial planning process of new operations should significantly cut back the number of unanticipated resource shortages and security hazards that lead to mission failures, endanger the lives of awaiting recipients and jeopardize the prospects of future U.N. aid missions.

Conclusion

At the dawn of the 21st century, we are still a long way from establishing a world free from hunger. However, human advancements in technology and political thought during the past few decades have brought us closer to reaching this goal. Although the lives of millions of hungry people have been transformed with the help of the U.N., there is no room for complacency. Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger, and nearly a fifth of the world’s population continues to live in abject poverty. The basic right to adequate and nutritious food, which many people take for granted, remains a distant dream for those who fight with food shortages every day of their lives. When the assets of the world’s three richest men are more than the combined GNP of all the least developed countries on the planet, such a vast presence of deep poverty and hunger in a world of apparent opulence is a moral indignation.

What is encouraging is that the U.N. has led the international community to adopt collective goals of eradicating hunger and reducing poverty. The inexorable bond between the two conditions is evident in the world as hunger is an important cause as well as an effect of poverty. Labor, often the only asset of the poor, is devalued if one is hungry and cannot perform adequately. Likewise, the lack of food compromises one’s mental and physical health, while reducing productivity and wages earned. This cyclical and parasitic relationship between hunger and poverty generates an inter-generational chain of events in many developing parts of the world. For that reason, targets to half the number of undernourished people by 2015 have been set forth at the World Food Summit, held in Rome in 1996, and adopted in the Millennium Development Goals, which offer the promise of making the world a better place for all of humanity. Nevertheless, there remains a conspicuous disparity between the tacit acceptance of global responsibility for eliminating hunger and poverty and the extent to which tangible action has been taken. Despite the obvious benefits of the U.N.’s food aid programs, the international community has provided only a fraction of the resources required to make a substantial difference. This trend of progressively declining support compromises what is supposed to be a global aim to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.

The slow progress in fulfilling the internationally agreed goals points to the need to not only increase the volume of resources devoted to the food aid effort, but also target the objectives more effectively. International funding for hunger eradication needs to rise to a level that is proportionate to the problem and be more secure in commitment. Furthermore, a rapid reduction in hunger and malnutrition will require a bilateral approach. On one hand, direct measures have to be taken to grant access to food for all those in extreme poverty, and thereby nutritionally empowering the poor to break out of the hunger trap. At the same time, efforts must be made to initiate developmental projects with respect to agriculture, education, and economy in order to provide the people with a sustainable exodus from hunger and poverty.

The U.N.’s assistance to the poor and hungry should not be thought of as an act of charity but be considered a moral imperative. Besides, it is in the self-interest of the international community to eradicate hunger and poverty because a world without hunger and poverty can attain more peace, political stability, development, and prosperity. Therefore, the United Nations must continue to maintain the solidarity of its member states and utilize the available global resources in order to complete its mission to purge the world of hunger and malnutrition.

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Democratization as American Foreign Policy: U.S. Policy Towards China and Russia

Corey J. Maness

American foreign policy over the last several years has put the United States in a position of diplomatic weakness. This is troubling as China has been upgrading its military capability and extending its strong diplomatic reach where American interest once stood. In order to rebound from the deficiency of foreign policy the U.S. must reach out to Russia and bring it closer to the West.

Introduction

The intent of this article is to examine the relationship between the United States, China, and Russia. I will examine whether the current policy of democratization and moral authority put forth by the Bush Administration, and historically by America, is in the best interest for the United States. It is my contention that China is going to become a threat to U.S. power in the next decade as a subtle cold war has already begun. American foreign policy must shift toward Russia so that the Russian Federation can be used to balance the growing Chinese threat. Further, this article will catalogue some events and ideological differences that are unique obstacles that can only be overcome with the right leadership. The balance of world diplomatic power has been shifting toward China and it is only a matter of time before the military and economic power of the Chinese state can match that of the United States. This article will recommend policy changes that will keep U.S. power from waning further in the shadow of the ailing operation in Iraq.

The Prelude to Conflict

Following the Money and Chinese Policy

China's economy has been growing very rapidly over the past decade, having double-digit growth year after year. The Chinese leadership has been opening up to a slightly more liberalized economic system, which has contributed to explosive growth. All of this economic development has allowed the Chinese government to expand their diplomatic reach in this region and throughout the world. It is essential to recognize that the Chinese, while they are spending significant amounts of money on their military, have been using soft power. This is an attempt to obtain some of its own influence and counter American hard power, because hard power can only go so far.

As always, with economic growth, comes the increased thirst for energy. China is no different. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has been engaging in billion dollar energy deals with the Chinese government. In fact the Chinese have increased their presence as a global oil partner by quadrupling their imports from Latin America and importing more than 40% of their supply from the Middle East.¹ In 2004, the Chinese state-owned petroleum company, Sinopec, made a deal with Iran that is estimated to be worth almost $70 billion. This was China's biggest oil deal ever with any Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member state.² The Chinese leadership has been circling the globe from Latin America to Africa to the Middle East in order to secure the energy supplies they need to continue to fuel economic growth (perhaps at the expense of socialism) and extend their influence around the world. China's energy deals in the Middle East have made them a principle actor in the area and could represent an obstacle for American hegemonic influence, given its dismal popularity ratings across the Arab world.

China has been evolving its global strategy to meet the demands of growth and power. Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, started the country's march toward a freer-market economic system and the trend still continues. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) even officially calls their economy "Market-Socialism", the likes of which are unique and the first in history.

After more than a century of misrule, China is now run by the best governing class in generation. Gone are the aging commissars clinging to party rule; they have been replaced by leaders committed to moving the country forward, including many young mayors who have been trained in U.S. universities.³

This speaks volumes about the Chinese desire to advance their country as a major economic power player at the expense of the ideology that has dominated the country for more than 50 years.

China's economic development has allowed them to engage in rapid military expansion over the last decade. Since the 1990s, the Chinese have more than doubled their defense spending, at least according to official reports. This comes at a time where external threats to China are at the lowest that they have been in a very long time. The ongoing and accelerated modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) gives the inclination that China expects new threats to make themselves clear, or perhaps a pre-emptive strike on a state that it sees as a threat. The Chinese have purchased Russian fighter planes, warships, and have had continual interest in acquiring additional naval assets. Many officials in the U.S. and across the region have expressed concern, even in countries that have normalized relations with the Chinese. ⁴
The Russia Question

Russian influence in China is obvious. They share a border as well as a close economic relationship. The exchange of goods, services, military hardware, and political support has been well documented. Since the end of the Cold War the fall of the Soviet Union, China has become the dominant actor in the region and Russia sees China as its way to gain back its superpower status.

American-Russian relations have been rocky at best in recent years and with Scotland Yard concluding that a former KGB spy was assassinated by Russian authorities will not help Russia regain any moral ground with the West. This is why they have become much closer with their neighbor to the north. They are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, which allows them both to express significant influence over the council’s decisions, which includes their veto power. Russia and China have applied what Stephen Walt, Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, calls balancing as a method of shifting power from one state to another, or group of countries. Balancing is the method by which countries see a possible threat from another country, and instead of bending to that countries demands, they ally themselves to counteract the danger that the more powerful state poses. In this case, the United States in not necessarily a military threat but it is a political and economic one, given the history of the Cold War and containment policy.

Russia’s history with most of its neighbors has been strained, having gone to war with nearly all of them. This trend is also true of its relations with China, particularly in the post-Stalin era. When the Soviets were still searching for a successor to Stalin, Mao Zedong was expecting for the Russians to look toward China as the new citadel of communism. However, it did not turn out quite as Mao envisioned and he felt insulted that the Russians did not acknowledge China’s position. Finally in 1962, a short three years since Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new leader of Russia, a small conflict broke out between the two countries. A border clash between the two ideological brothers took place over several islands in the Amur River. While not much came out of it, it prompted both states to move missile silos and other military resources to the border. A possible outcome of this event was China’s involvement in the nonaligned movement throughout the height of the Cold War.

Russia’s rise can be attributed largely to President Vladimir Putin’s leadership. After succeeding Boris Yeltsin as president, his administration has overseen “strict macroeconomic management” and surging energy prices. These trends have fostered an economy with lower than normal inflation (9%), declining deficits, and the repayment of foreign debts (once a source of Russian shame). Putin’s success has reinvigorated Russian nationalism. The Russian quality of life has improved substantially, especially in the urban areas. Putin ranks among the most popular leaders, carrying one of the highest approval ratings in the world. The ex-KGB Colonel is a shrewd leader likely to continue to lead Russia to a more powerful position in world politics with his people behind him. It seems for the at least the interim what Putin says – goes.

Regional Tension and Strategic Canon

There is also the historic tension between China and Japan, a close U.S. ally. Trade and political disputes put the U.S. in a unique position. As the only remaining superpower in the world, the U.S. does not want to abandon Japan, but at the same time it needs to be a stabilizing force with China. Furthermore, the successful test of a nuclear weapon by the North Koreans will add further friction between the U.S. and the Chinese proxy. All of these entanglements present a clear indication that the United States and China must (a) be able to find common ground, and sacrifices must be made on both sides, or, (b) one must be able to deter the other in backing down without military conflict.

Conflict over the status of Taiwan is also a major source of friction in the region. On the record, the United States does not support an independent Taiwan and recognizes it as part of Chinese territory. Conversely, the American government has vowed to defend with force the move toward Taiwanese independence should they be met with anti-independence aggression from the Chinese. This is, however, just political rambling and the status-quo will remain for some time. Although a volatile issue, neither party is willing to put Taiwan in its vital national interest at this time. This is because of the symbiotic political and economic support each country gives to one another. The U.S. needs China’s support in its War on Terror (as China gave very little opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003). North Korea, and Iran, and China, cannot afford to offend U.S. policy-makers because economic retaliation can inflict a serious wound on the Chinese economic growth.

Last year was one of crafty political maneuvering for both China and the United States. President Bush signed an agreement with India that would provide U.S. nuclear technology in exchange for (a) allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct yearly inspections of their nuclear facilities, (b) separate its military-related nuclear facilities from the civilian ones, and (c) share information on suspected terrorist activity and conduct joint military operations to combat terrorism. While many on the side question the agreement, the deal will bring closer relations between the two countries. Nevertheless, it begs the question, "Is non-proliferation dead?" It certainly has weakened the U.S. argument for opposing nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea.

There are valid reasons why the U.S. should have avoided such an agreement or asked for more in return. The strategic advantages and disadvantages must be examined because as some political scientists would argue, proliferation is inevitable (For the sake of argument I am going to assume that it is). In order to maintain a check Chinese influence in the region, the U.S. brought the largest democracy in the world to its side. This deal has now made India into a legitimate nuclear power in U.S. eyes after decades of marginaliza-
tion. India also has become the second fastest growing economy in the world since it shifted to a liberalized economic structure several years ago.

This alliance can also serve to reach out to Russia, which has had close relations with India throughout the Soviet era and even somewhat today. The Soviet Union supplied about 70% of India’s conventional weapons from fighter jets to small arms. Much of these sales took place during the 1980s which probably made officials in Washington uneasy and led to the American blockage of the sale of Russian missile technology to India in 1992. Finally, although there was a disagreement between India and Russia about how much debt they owed to the latter, the underlying factor was that it was resolved peacefully and proves that both countries have a mutual understanding of one another. This makes the newly formed Indo-American relationship a strategic advantage because the U.S. can now reach out further to Russia with India on its side. It is also important to note that India can serve a secondary purpose, that of an additional balance to China. However, the Chinese still remember the 1962 border dispute with India where they easily defeated the Indian Army.

The agreement that the U.S. has signed with India has also prompted China to make a few deals of its own. In an effort to further cozy up to the Islamic world, China has agreed to supply nuclear technology to Pakistan, a supposed U.S. ally in the War on Terror. China is to provide Pakistan with nuclear technology, ballistic missiles (suspected of having being built by the North Koreans), Chinese fighter planes, and conventional small arms. The obvious advantage to China is that it will increase its trade and make its presence more known in Central Asia. Further, the Islamic world will be able to think of China as a friend, helping a fellow Islamic “brother” to rid itself of Western influence. President Musharraf has no choice but to sway from his open support of the United States because his people are fiercely anti-Western. Either way, this agreement is part of a larger power struggle that is taking place across Asia and the world between China and the United States.

There can be a similarity drawn from history with the invention of both of these agreements. Although it is not as significant as the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the signing of the Warsaw Pact, these agreements can mark a significant change in the practice of global politics. There is a distinction that has to be made because the Cold War was more pronounced and everyone was aware who the enemy was, or who was the enemy’s proxy. Now the practice of alliance formation has become much more covert. This is not to suggest that there are certain countries that are strictly enemies or allies, but rather in the globalized political system in which the world functions, states are becoming keener to the advantages another state has over their own. Power has become a regional balancing act that spans the globe with every powerful state using others to counter another powerful state.

While it is neither the United States’ nor China’s national interest to go to war with one another, the fact remains that these are two world powers that may have a reason to do so in the next decade or two. This is why the United States must bring Russia into closer relations with the West. Should Putin begin to bend toward more western ideals, China will realize it does not have a monopoly on power in the region. If the United States wants to play any kind of tough diplomatic hand in these disputes, it will need a strong regional actor for support.

The American Foreign Policy

The American Attitude and Regaining Lost Influence

Americans see themselves as the world’s missionary for democracy. It is deeply rooted in the founding as the United States is the oldest existing democracy in the world. The American approach to foreign policy is a translation of a belief that American democracy is the perfect, most rational, and above all, most superior form of governance. Many fiascos of foreign policy by the United States have been made on this account; the Bay of Pigs invasion is just one example. This is not to say that democracy is incompatible with other cultures, it is to say that the approach must be taken with much more caution and respect. Many miscalculations have triggered events that are beyond the control of Washington and end in failure. This happens because other people are not going to simply embrace American-style democracy overnight. The President is the chief conductor and architect of foreign policy and the American people are proudful; they will not send someone to the White House that does not proclaim a strong message of support for fledgling democracies in around the world.

This trend continues with the “Bush Doctrine” which has produced less than desirable results in the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Any capital that was gained in the aftermath of 9/11 has been lost in the shadow of the Iraq War. The theory that democracy will spread throughout the region as a result of Iraq adopting it has also been proven quite idealistic and wholly unattainable in that region of the world. Although it will not happen until the next American president takes office, the course of U.S. foreign policy must be altered significantly, principally toward Russia.

The Bush foreign policy did not offer elasticity to make necessary changes depending on what region or countries are being dealt with. From his early days in office President Bush championed the theory of democratic peace, principally after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Needless to say that American foreign policy would never be the same from that day forward. The President’s interpretation of how American foreign relations should be conducted should coincide with its fight against global terrorism: the spread of democracy will start a chain reaction of democracy and peace that will spread throughout the region and the world. Unfortunately, as in the case of Iraq,
there has been setback after setback of establishing a central government because of many variables that have been in place in the Middle East for generations. Regardless, the Bush method of diplomacy does not offer the necessary dynamic needed to wage an effective multinational foreign policy. It does not enable him to treat states on a case by case basis, but rather pushes democracy further up the list of priorities that may not be in the American interest.

Promoting democracy, especially when force is used, brings a number of factors to the table. It appears that the administration does not differentiate between foreign policy goals and humanitarian ones, or considers them one in the same. A focal point of promoting democracy is being successful at nation-building. In the past, especially post-war Europe, the U.S. completed one of the most successful nation-building projects in human history: The Marshall Plan. The difference between that and Iraq is that there was already a war fought between the people of the continent and they were ready for a new Europe. Further, European countries have become secular democracies and Islam is ingrained in the people of the Middle East. The West is going to be hard-pressed to find a Near Eastern country that is willing to divorce Islam from government. Given the lack of complete success that was expected in the run up to the Iraq War, the Bush foreign policy has lost credibility with many countries around the world and also his own constituents. The American people will be reluctant to try something similar to Iraq again in the near future. This is because of the freshness of the Vietnam War in the American mind. Moreover, the average American does not think that the promotion of democracy is going to make the world or their country safer. They have come to realize that nation-building and democratization is a long and complicated process that can take a generation or more and the global community must be willing to make the necessary sacrifices to make it successful. No longer are they willing to make those sacrifices for people in a far-off land, at least not at the current station of American politics.

Alleged reports of torture and prisoner mistreatment in Guantanamo Bay and Abu-Graib prisons have also been detrimental to the American moral authority. Hence, it has further damaged the ability for Bush to use democratization as a moral obligation and part of his overall foreign policy. The world, unfortunately, now sees the American foreign policy as a flawed and phony strategy.

If the U.S. is going to gain back its diplomatic power and not just be perceived as a hegemonic force that has questionable human rights ethics in its own right, a shift of policy is in order. Meddling in the internal affairs of other countries is not serving American interests at this time. The likelihood that President Bush will abandon the beliefs that morality and democracy should be a focal point in his foreign policy is wishful thinking. A dynamic new foreign policy is in order that stresses American interests and relaxes the urge to democratize every nation on the planet. This is not to say that the U.S. should not encourage governments to take steps towards democracy, but pushing it at the cost of losing allies is a losing strategy. Also, Americans must come to terms with the man with the biggest muscles does not make a leader. In order for the United States to truly be a global leader and regain the respect that has been lost over the past few decades, policymakers must show a change in attitude. States may acknowledge that another state has the strongest, most advanced military in the world, but military power does not make a leader. Self-proclamation as the world’s final authority on morality is something that the American government is going to have to rethink in the years ahead. Respect is earned through diplomatic power, not by building bigger bombs or faster jets. This is the example that many other countries have been using and the U.S. is reluctant to follow because of its arrogance as the only remaining superpower in the world. The next administration must take care in respecting the sovereignty of the nations that the U.S. will need in the future. This is of course is Russia.

**Bringing Russia West**

Russians are a very nationalist people, even in the wake of national turmoil. About two-thirds of the Russian population is below the poverty line, their population is declining by over a half a million per year, and diseases like HIV and tuberculosis have ravaged the people. As it stands, Vladimir Putin has had consistent approval ratings that hover around 70 percent.11 Putin is not going to be easily swayed into bowing to U.S. interests, and why should he? He is an adept leader in a time where the individual personalities of leaders are going to affect the shape of international relations. Being harsh on Russia’s domestic affairs is not a way to bring both countries closer together. Last year Vice President Cheney offered some critical remarks about Russia’s return to policies that are less than democratic in regards to non-governmental organizations, think-tanks, and the sale of military hardware to Venezuela and Iran. He said, “In many areas of civil society - from religion and the news media, to advocacy groups and political parties - the government has unfairly and improperly restricted the rights of the people,” but stopped short on calling them an adversary saying, “none of us believes that Russia is fated to become an enemy.”12 These comments were probably not intended to publicly attack Russia, but rather an affirmation of the ever present American commitment to democratization. The problem is that Moscow did not take this lightly and when asked on the Today Show about it Putin said, “I think these kinds of comments from your vice president amount to the same thing as an unfortunate shot while hunting.”13 In fact,

few Russians accept at face value the idea that the U.S. is genuinely interested in spreading democracy around the world – they tend to believe...that America’s thrusts into the Middle East, The Caucasus, and Central Asia so close to Mother Russia’s soft southern underbelly are an effort to lock up scarce energy resources.14

Again with an approval rating steady at 70 per cent it is not likely that Putin will take the West trying to prevent Russia’s rise lightly. He has the political capital necessary to reinvent the Russia that he believes can be realized.
Recognizing Threats and Connecting with Russia

Into the Embrace

The Chinese are positioning themselves all over the world to confront American interests when anti-Americanism is at its highest. It has been in recent memory. Russia is not just a nation-state but a very old civilization that takes pride in its common history. Their dignity stems from having defeated Napoleon and Hitler on their own soil. Russians are not going to forget this. This is why the United States should start, as former Republican Presidential Candidate Patrick Buchanan says, showing Russia some respect.15

Russia has a unique position in the world as a bridge. They cannot be defined as Western or Eastern people, but rather they are their own people. While a traditional enemy of the West, Russia can now be embraced in its rise because larger threats exist that cannot be tamed. Although Moscow has not supported U.S. sanctions on Iran and has traded military hardware with countries that are self-proclaimed enemies of America, a stronger relationship is needed with this traditional power. While Iran should be prevented from acquiring it for aggressive behavior, the US should not use it political capital (which has waned enough) to battle Russia on this issue. The West and the United States must embrace Russia and welcome them into the distinguished “club” of powerful states. History has always posed Russia (and former satellites) versus the United States (and the West), and it has been hard to overcome this notion almost two decades since the collapse of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. For the security and the prosperity of both nations and the world, an alliance between the United States and Russia is the only way that would be able to effectively counter a growing threat from China and ease tension in the region. While China would not immediately appreciate the closer relations that a U.S.-Russian alliance would mean, it would ultimately bring all three countries closer together. In order words, it is for the good of the region and the world.

The growth of the Chinese economy and military is going to be a destabilizing factor because of the uneasiness that a strong China gives to Japan and other neighboring countries. Charles Krauthammer asserts how the U.S. should deal with this growing threat, the United States should strive to ‘contain’ China by cultivating security agreements with form U.S. (and Chinese) enemies, Vietnam and Russia, and by maintaining a strong alliance with Japan, even if it means overlooking a few inequities in the U.S.-Japan trade relationship... [and] promote political liberalization by supporting Chinese dissidents, publicly criticizing China’s human rights abuses, and opposing Beijing’s efforts to accumulate international prestige.16

The United States and the West are going to have to come to terms with the fact that Putin is blazing a path for Russia’s triumphant return, and there is nothing that anybody can say to stop him from completing his goal. American policymakers must come to accept that Russia’s power is returning and the sooner they are embraced, the better off the U.S. position will be in the realm of international relations. The West has traditionally been fearful of Russia, but a fractured history must not prevent closer relations with the Russians. Rather, the West must stop trying to prevent Russia’s rise because this will only be perceived (rightly so) as anti-Russian sentiment; since no power wants a strong Russia they can no longer control.

Since nothing is going to prevent Russia’s rise, becoming closely allied with them sooner rather than later would help prevent a conflict in the not-so-distant future. The following analysis epitomizes why the great Western powers want to embrace the Russian rise.

Until recently, Russia saw itself as Pluto in the Western solar system, very far from the center but still fundamentally a part of it. Now it has left that orbit entirely: Russia’s leaders have given up on becoming part of the West and have started creating their own Moscow-centered system.17

The Moscow-centered system would bring back the Russian capital as a citadel of Eastern power, with Beijing as a close ally. The former ideological brothers would both be powerful actors in the region and around the globe. This is precisely why the U.S. must interject itself before the Sino-Russian alliance can become much stronger. Not only will a strong relationship with Russia aid U.S. interests abroad, but America can use the alliance as a bridge to eventually become closer to China.

Conclusion

China is gearing up to equip its military for a serious conflict, or perhaps to make the West uneasy about its status. Either way, the United States must not be idle and has to take the initiative in expanding its sphere of influence into China’s backyard. The most logical country would be Russia.

While their behavior and the Kremlin’s scathing attack on American foreign policy in February 2007 troubles some Americans, this must not be allowed to cloud the judgment of policymakers for a new American policy towards Russia. These actions are just a response to the current direction of American foreign relations and the attempt to expand NATO. America needs to take the first step into normalizing relations and be wary of disrespecting the Russian leadership or its people. The Russian people have always been nationalistic and insults to Russia are never taken lightly.

Should the U.S. be successful in bringing Russia more towards the West, that is allowing them to see the mutual interest in the partnership, it will be able to keep the balance of power from shifting in China’s direction and avoid any aggressive action from them. Reaching out to the Russians must be a cornerstone of future American foreign policy. This is not to say that the U.S. should bow at the altar of
the Kremlin, however. U.S. foreign policy officials must make it clear that the U.S. has no more intention of influencing Russia's domestic affairs and insist that Russia refrain from the same in its former bloc (i.e. Georgia and Latvia). A strong Russo-U.S. relationship is the only way to suppress the growing threat from China and promote further international security and cooperation.

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Potential For Conflict Over Water

Shu-Ming Chang

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine, as the title suggests, the potential for future conflicts over water. As with all cases, numerous circumstances contribute and worsen the problem at hand. So what is the problem with water? Isn't the earth occupied mostly with water? Yes, most of the globe is occupied by large chunks of water, and thus for many centuries, people thought the problem with the lack of water only belonged to the underdeveloped/developing countries. In fact, many even thought that because two thirds of mother earth is occupied by water, water will never become a problem. Today, for many, water is not a scarce natural resource - it is everywhere, every time, and easy to obtain. Yet, at the same time, there are more people who suffer from a shortage of fresh water obtainable. The truth is, water is being consumed at an extraordinarily fast rate and something must be done about it. One must realize the problem at hand, even if he or she is lucky enough to be born in an area of the world where water is not a scarce resource. This is probably one of the many reasons why people in developed countries consume an incredible amount of water per day compared to the people living in developing or underdeveloped countries - because they've never been exposed to the threat of not having enough water to go around. But now it is time to face it - the fact that water is running short and humans have neither done anything to prevent it nor have created any preventive measures.

It is interesting how people never think of water as a scarce natural resource. We know, for example, that diamonds are a scarce natural resource and people are willing to pay an enormous sum for it. But water? What if one day, in the distant future, the price of water becomes more expensive than a one-carat diamond ring? The funny thing is, schools teach pupils the importance of nonrenewable natural resources such as coal, oil, and fossil fuels. We are taught in schools that these valuable resources are not renewable for long periods of time - thousands, millions, and even billions of years. Thus, we are also taught to cherish them and to accept them generously as a gracious gift of Mother Nature. The fact is, water is never going to be renewable. Once it is gone, it will be gone forever. Thus, if this is the case, why aren't the schools teaching its pupils the importance of water as a natural resource that is diminishing, at an exceedingly shocking rate? And even if we know the importance of water in our lives, we are very disrespectful of it. Maybe the problem lies with the nature of human kind - the fact that people are never respectful of anything given to them, thinking of those as granted, not something we have to strive for in order to obtain.

With a rapidly increasing population rate of the world today, demand for water will obviously grow accordingly. However, the amount of water resource is the same today as it was since the beginning of the times. Thus, the main purpose of this paper is to examine one of the major world threats to the existence of humankind - lack of water - in the world surrounding us today. The paper will present facts regarding the issue, the nature of the crisis we are dealing with, and its consequences in order to arrive at detailed analyses and hopefully a reachable solution to the crisis at hand. It is time for a major change. Both the planet and humans need water for survival. No water, no life.

Facts

The important facts which are relevant to an examination of this subject are as follows:

Source of the Problem

Availability & Usage

Many people think that water is not a scarcity on the planet because more than two thirds of the earth is water. However, what we fail to realize is the fact that not much water on the globe is fresh and usable. Of all the water on earth, 97.5% is salt water, and of the remaining 2.5% fresh water, more than 70% is frozen locked up in glaciers or too deep underground to reach. The other 30% is mostly present in soil or in underground aquifers. Thus, we can conclude that less than 1% of the earth’s water is fresh and usable. Those are the water we get from lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and underground sources. Yet, even that is not the actual amount accessible to us because more than half of the earth’s rivers today are heavily polluted. This then leaves us with almost nothing to go around.

Today, 70% of world’s available water is consumed in agriculture. The majority of the rest are used in industries to satisfy the rising human demand for goods. This is where the problem begins because industries that use this water fail to recycle it properly; they dump the waste into the water without giving it a second thought. The city of New Delhi, for example, dumps 200 million liters of raw sewage and 20 million liters of industrial wastes into the Yamuna River every day as the river flows on its way to the Ganges. Not only that, over three-quarters of China’s 50,000 kilometers of major rivers, including the Han River and the Yangtze River, are so filled with “pollution and sediment that they no longer support fish life.” Even if these countries/industries can afford the cost of installing a water-
sanitation mechanism, they fail to do so because they do not wish to spend a huge sum on something they do not believe in. Farmers also cause a problem in the wastage of water due to mismanagement of water in the process of farming.

**Lack of realization/Mismanagement**

People never thought about how to manage water, obviously because they never thought of it as a finite resource. Based on a study, between 12.5 and 14 billion cubic meters of water are available for human use annually. In other words, 9,000 cubic meters of water is available to an individual per year. By the year 2025, a person will have only 5,100 cubic meters of water available with the rapid growth in population. Even so, a person will have enough water to live only if water could be “distributed equally among the world’s population.” Thus, unfair distribution of water is one thing, mismanagement is another.

Because people never think of water as a valuable natural resource, they were able to, through history, abuse its use. They dumped trash into the river, washed clothes in the streams, and such, making what is already less unfit for use. Moreover, with 70% of water used in agriculture, methods of irrigation also plays a major role in mismanagement of water. Irrigation “allows wastage on a prodigal scale, with water trickling away or simply evaporating before it can do any good.” The use of automatic sprinklers that spray water at a designated time is also creating a problem of mismanagement. The problem with sprinklers is that they sprinkle water everywhere, even at places where water is not necessary. The designing of fountains and water sprinklers for a grand view is another major problem. Most of these water land on ground and evaporate in no times.

When water becomes scarce, people turn to the government for solutions. They fail to realize that it is their problem, not the government’s. The government can create policies that alleviate the problem, but eventually it is the people’s job. However, in order to satisfy its citizens, the government is now drawing up water from underground resources. With nowhere to turn to, a lot of governments find the solution in drawing up groundwater. In fact, a lot of governments today rely on “using subterranean supplies of groundwater instead, but that is like making constant withdrawals from a bank account without every paying anything into it.” Thus, today we are in the process of creating for ourselves a negative bank account.

**Rapid Population Growth**

The world’s population is growing today, tomorrow, and in the days to come. Although the rapid growth in population have somewhat slowed down, population growth is still a major problem in many countries around the world. Today the population is growing by about 80 million people per year. This then adds to an increased demand in of 64 billion cubic meters of water per year, an amount “equivalent to the entire annual flow rate of the Rhine River.” For example, the number of water available for each individual is now one-third lower than it was in the 1970s because two billion people have been added to the planet. Although a minor increase in population such as 1% might not seem like much, this is causing a severe problem in populous countries such as India and China. In 1998, the estimated population growth rate of China was 1%. Nevertheless, because China’s population was 1.2 billion back then, a 1% in population growth rate meant 12 million additional people every year. These people will obviously consume what they rightfully own or more. As population continues to grow, more and more countries will face severe water shortages. This will drive the countries currently facing water shortage into water scarcity.

**Current Crisis over Water**

**Reality**

Based on a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the world is currently facing a severe water crisis, although many in the developed countries might not realize it. Based on the report, an estimated 1.1 billion people have “no access to safe drinking water,” 2.5 billion “lack proper sanitation.” This means, one or two out of five people in the world today do not have access to safe water. People living in countries where water resource is scarce often find themselves the victim of water-related diseases and despite that, they have to walk miles and miles a day in order to get whatever water is available – even if it means that the water is unsafe. Today, a country is said to be experiencing water stress when water supplies drop below 1,700 cubic meters per person annually. At this point, people still have what they need to survive, but not much above basic necessities. A country is said to be experiencing water scarcity when the level drops between 1,000 to 1,700 cubic meters of water per person annually. At this point, it means the country is likely to suffer from threatened food production, hindrance in economic development, and damage in ecosystems. As of 1995, thirty-one countries were facing water stress or water scarcity. The rate is expected to rise, however, as industries develop and as population continues to grow rapidly. Today, especially in Thailand and Malaysia, the level of water pollution is so heavy that rivers contain “30 to 100 times more pathogens, heavy metals, and poisons from industry and agriculture than is permitted by government health standards.” And adding to this casualty is the accumulation of more than 290 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, and toxic wastes in the water resource from industries worldwide, further lessening the minimal amount we have at present.

**Water-obtaining Procedures**

For people in developed countries living in urban areas, obtaining water is no problem. You simply turn the faucet on in your house and there you go, fresh and safe water directly in front of you. If you are thirsty while walking on the street, feel free to walk into a store nearby and purchase a bottle of water for less than $1.00. You drink half a bottle, your thirst is gone, feel too bothered to carry it around, you throw the not-so-empty bottle in to a nearby trash can, and you walk your way. Want to take a shower? Simply walk into your bath-
room, turn the shower on, leave it on for a few minutes, let the water run, so you can get plenty of hot water before you step in. Again, all that water goes wasted. For this reason, people simply never think of water as a valuable natural resource. The situation in other parts of the world, however, is quite different. Today and each day, women and female children of underdeveloped or developing countries spend more than 200 million hours to collect water from a “distant, often polluted source.” For us, we do not have to work for water if we do not feel like working for a day. However, for those people who are in dreadful need of water, even if they do not feel like walking for hours and hours a day to get water, this is a must because they lack access to a safe and convenient source of water. And the situation is tragic because even if they get whatever amount of water they can get, they are exposing themselves to high risks of diseases, even death.

Water-Related Diseases

Annual Casualties

Each year, numerous people die from various reasons. Many die from different diseases such as lung cancer and hepatitis B, many die from acts of violence, many die in accidents, many die as a result of natural disasters, and still many die in wars. Out of all the reasons possibly imaginable, the most serious cause for human deaths in the world today is due to deaths from diseases. It’s more shocking, however, that the death casualties caused by unsanitized water each year surpasses that of all other violence combined. More than five million people die as a direct result of water-related diseases each year – “ten times the number of casualties killed in wars around the globe.” At any given time, half the people in developing countries are suffering from water-related diseases. Simply said, water-related diseases are the “leading cause of death in the world.” The killer “takes the lives of more than 14,000 people each day and is responsible for 80% of all sickness in the world.” Thus, patients with water-borne diseases fill half of the hospital beds in the world today, with two-thirds of the world’s population facing severe water shortages. Of the thirty-seven major diseases in developing countries, twenty-one are water and sanitation related. This statistic is phenomenal, considering the fact that it surpasses that of any other diseases we are closely acquainted with today and are also known for one of the top-killers of the people in the world. And as the water crisis continues to worsen, the increase in the number of people suffering from water-related diseases will skyrocket.

Possible Reduction & Prevention

Even today, right now, at this very moment, a child is killed in 15 seconds for waterborne diseases such as malaria, typhoid, cholera, and dysentery. And this leads to the fact that today, and every day, more than “30,000 children die before reaching their fifth birthdays, killed either by hunger or by easily-preventable diseases,” one of which is water. Water-related diseases, responsible for 80% of all sickness in the world, alone take away the lives of more than 14,000 people every day. This is a tragedy, considering the fact that water-related diseases can be 80% prevented through proper sanitation of water and education in underdeveloped countries. In reducing these diseases, adequate quantities of safe and fresh water plays a crucial role. Trachoma, a disease exposed to 500 million people and which made six to nine million blind, can be reduced by 25% by supplying adequate quantities of safe and fresh water to the regions at risk. Diarrhea can also be reduced significantly by water because other than spreading through drinking water, it can also be spread through many routes such as improper hygiene and sanitation. Thus, having enough water to improve household and personal hygiene can greatly prevent this disease. Having enough water also means reducing intestinal worms that can be controlled better through better water, hygiene, and sanitation. Schistosomiasis is also a severe disease contracted by 200 million people in the world today. Twenty million out of the two-hundred million suffer severe consequences. This disease, like others, can be reduced 77% through safe and fresh drinkable water. In other words, 80% of the diseases in the world today can be controlled significantly through proper sanitation measures, which need water to accomplish. Which means, if we learn to use water effectively and adopt methods that can provide safe water to many poor regions of the world, 80% of the diseases can be greatly reduced, lessening the number of people having to go to hospitals, and thus greatly reducing the amount spent in the Medicare systems.

Educated Future Predictions

Situation in the Future

If people fail to realize the value of water even now, the situation is bound to worsen. By the year 2025, more than 2.7 billion people will face severe water shortages. This is the same as saying that in 2025, 30% of the world’s population in fifty countries will face the consequences of water shortage. Over the next two decades, our use of water is estimated to increase by about 40%, including the 17% more water needed in agriculture to feed the entire world. If these goals are not accomplished, then easy enough, humans will live on without enough food to fill their stomachs. Other than having less food to eat, less water will hinder economic development which can cause discomfort in many other areas of life. Not only that, lack of water can also bring other problems, such as personal hygiene and sanitation concerns.

If, as predicted, water becomes so scarce by the year 2020, the number of people infected with water-related diseases will also increase tremendously. Water and diseases have an inverse relationship - meaning less water, more diseases, and vice versa. Thus, if no action is taken to address the basic human needs for water, as many as 135 million innocent lives will be taken away by the year 2020. At this statistic, many question the value of the Millennium Goals announced by the United Nations in the year 2000. Yet, even if this goal is achieved, somewhere between thirty-four and seventy-six million people will lose their lives from water-related diseases by 2020. By then situations can become very severe - people with barely anything to eat and almost nothing to drink.
Analysis

Based on the above facts, one can arrive at the following possible opinions on the designated topics:

Nature of the Water Crisis

Man-made Disaster

There are two major reasons for disasters – those that are manmade and those that are naturally caused. The reason for the current crisis on water is the prior one – a disaster we have brought upon ourselves. Humans use water for all sorts of reasons – sanitation, hygiene, agriculture, industry, drink, and etc. There is not a single day humans live on without the presence of water. Yet, we do not know how to cherish it, just as we do not know how to cherish other natural resources we have. In our desire to pursue our desire of a higher standard of living, we have used up water extensively, both in industry and agriculture. The industries that have used the water do not sanitize it before it is being dumped back into the rivers again, because the cost of sanitizing water is tremendous. Just to reduce the cost, the industries fail to sanitize what they have caused. What is worse, the industries dump their toxic wastes into the river/ocean/any water source near them in order to dispose of it. This is another problem because the action is causing tremendous pollution, making what is once safe to use no longer safe and fresh anymore. Along with this, increase number of cars and use of gasoline fuel is also playing a major role in creating the current water crisis. As the chemical substance is released from the gasoline fuel into the nearby air, it eventually travels up to the atmosphere and creates a hole in the ozone layer surrounding the earth. This then creates the phenomenon known as global warming. As world’s temperature rises, water evaporates much more quickly, causing droughts in various regions of the world. In a world with such a rapid population growth, people failed to learn that water is a finite resource, along with the fact that it is an invaluable resource for this reason. All that people have learned since the creation of property is how to manage more for myself, how to get more for myself, how to get even better things for myself, and etc. In other words, all we have managed to learn is how to do things for my benefit only. This is the mindset that attributed greatly to the point where we are facing severe water shortages today.

Inability of Scientific Technology

Even with the scientific technology we have available today, scientists are not able to figure out or predict the entire natural flow of the major rivers of the world. If only scientists can figure this out, then humans can do more than building dams to control the flow of the river. It is this lack of ability to figure out the water route that creates more confusion in determining where water travels to and thus what actions should be taken. Another scientific inability is that we still have not figured how to desalinate salt water perfectly into drinkable water. Thus, the development of desalination facilities that can turn salt water into drinkable water will significantly aid in resolving the crisis we face at hand, because having the technology to desalinate water means a lot more water to go around. Lastly, the modern-day technology should create a solution to the destruction of the ozone layer and the situation of global warming, so that less water evaporates into the sky. Other than these technologies that can greatly aid in resolving the problem at hand, creating new technological inventions that can evenly and fairly distribute water to everyone in the world will greatly reduce the level of crisis at hand.

Current Problems

Ignorance

More than half the people in developed countries today simply do not understand the fact that even if supplies seem plentiful and enough, everyone is at risk of water shortage in the near future if we don’t start saving now due to a rapid population growth and increasing demand. This ignorance then leads to their excess wastage of water, which go wasted with doing absolutely no good to anyone. People in developed countries turn on showers for an entire hour and let the water run just so that they can get a decent shower; they let the faucet run among dishes so that it can naturally rinse out the excess oil and residue left on the plates before they wash it out; they flush the toilet way too many times if they feel it is not clean enough; they let the water run while they are cleaning the bathroom/kitchen/sink. The reasons are endless if one has higher mind set on counting them out. The bottom solution is, people use too much water, more than what they need in order to survive. On average, a person needs five gallons of water a day to survive. A person in developed countries use 100-176 gallons of water a day while a person in developing countries use less than the average needed for basic survival. By this we can tell that more water is being wasted than being used properly. A person who has traveled to certain parts of Africa will know how huge the gap can be – a poor woman with children crying out for their thirst versus a woman with children with protruding bellies refusing to eat simply because they had too much snack an hour ago. This is the reality we are facing concerning water today – those that have too much and those that have way too little.

No Proper Sanitization – Too Costly

Today, many developed and rich countries argue that if water sanitation technology has been developed, why not use them to save thousands of lives? The simple answer to this doubt of theirs is this: there simply isn’t enough money in the poor countries to afford such a cost. Even though water sanitation methods have been adopted widely through the past decade, the cost of installing the mechanism for the method still remains sky-rocketing. Some factories, for this reason, fail to install such machines and contribute significantly to water pollution. In poor countries, however, situations remain very negative. Compared to industries that choose not to install such mechanisms, the poor countries simply do not have enough budgets to both feed the population and to install such high price mechanism, resulting in a high percentage of population affected with water-related diseases, which acts as a #1 killer in the world today.
Future Predictions

Increased Casualties

As situation continue to worsen with the increase in global population and people living up to their standards, implications of water crisis will become extreme, affecting mostly people who are the “world’s poorest, limiting their ability to grow crops, which they need to survive.” Without water to grow their crops, these people will go hungry and eventually starve to death. Even if they do not starve to death, they are at high risk of contracting water-related diseases in the process of trying to get whatever water they have available. This will then lead to a higher percentage of people contracted with water-related diseases, which will eventually lead to more casualties each year. The situation can worsen if water become so scarce that even the middle-class people cannot afford it. They, too, will try to get whatever they can, even if they are putting themselves at high-risk.

Having less water also means having less for personal hygiene and sanitation. This will also lead to other diseases caused not as a direct result of unsafe water but as a side effect of it. Considering the fact that water shortage will become severe by the year 2020, people will take any measures if it means a bit more water. This will make people aware of the importance of water in a broad sense; the regretful thing is, however, that people have failed to realize it before, before situations got this worse.

Competitive Competition

Whether we are aware of the problem or not, signs of a future competition for water is witnessed in many areas of the world today already. This will eventually grow until a point where competition for water will become very competitive and fierce. Mr. Kofi Annan, United Nation’s Secretary General, actually commented that “fierce national competition over water resources has prompted fears that water issues contain the seeds of violent conflict.” Tension will become intense as water starts to diminish, and eventually the maintenance of water will become a #1 issue on the UN agenda. Today countries fight for useless things – money, territorial disputes, nuclear weapons, army, and etc – all things unnecessary for survival. So imagine how fierce it can be when it comes to water – a basic necessity of life. By then people will be willing to pay huge sums of money for a bottle of water, but only those who have the money to do so. Those who do not have enough money to buy a bottle of water will get what is available to them at great risk – polluted or unsanitized water. The government, obviously, will not want these tragic incidents to happen to their people. Thus, it will do anything to get its people what they need, even war if necessary.

Possible Solutions

Better Sanitization

A major problem with underdeveloped countries facing severe water shortages is due to the fact that the state doesn’t have enough money to purchase water-sanitizing machineries. These expensive machineries, which can cost up to thousands and even billions of dollars, are like stars in the sky for the poor countries. Not only are they hard to obtain, the cost of maintaining is also an area of great concern for countries that do not even have enough budget to feed the nation. This is such an extreme contrast with developed countries whose people have way too much to eat – from bread, appetizers, entrée, dessert, coffee, and even some snacks to bring the luxurious dinner table to an end. What is worse, most of these foods are uneaten, leaving tons of food trash every year – the amount that can possibly feed an entire underdeveloped nation. So what should be done about this excess money spent in a country for people’s mere enjoyment and excessive luxuries of life? The answer is: donate them to the underdeveloped countries so that they can start sanitizing their water resources. This will greatly reduce the number of people contracted with water-related diseases, which will greatly reduce annual casualties caused by these diseases. Also, if the process of better sanitization is adopted in all countries regardless of cost, then it would also mean there will be more water to go round. For one thing, life on earth needs every bit of water it can get, so even a tiny bit of polluted water should be sanitized and converted to usable water. This is not a hard thing to achieve – especially if the developed countries are willing to help those who are less fortunate than they are, because after all, the current water crisis concerns everyone, not just those who live in water shortage.

Lessen Water Wastage

Individuals in developed countries consume an average of twenty-five times more water per day than people in developing or underdeveloped countries. Now think about this – there are people who live day after day with twenty-five times less water than those living in a fairly decent standard of living. So what harm would it do if people decide to save a little bit of water everyday? It is estimated that an individual in United States consume an average of 125 gallons of water per day versus the five gallons an individual needs per day in order to survive. If every single individual in the United States decides to save two gallons of water per day, that would be more than enough water for a country such as Somalia. Today, it is estimated that the water per capita in North America is 18,742 cubic meters and 23,103 cubic meters in Latin America, compared to 1,247 cubic meters in the Middle East per year. If everyone in the North America, Latin America, and Europe agree on consuming two gallons less water per day, the water saved will make a day in the entire African continent and the Middle East a whole lot happier.

Education, Education, & Education

Education plays an important role in obtaining knowledge in places worldwide. The problem in developed countries, as stated earlier in the report, mentions the fact that water wastage in many developed countries is a direct result of the lack of education on water-related
facts. People value fossil fuels and oil more than they do water because they learn about its importance in schools. Whenever a person takes biology or chemistry related course, those issues are being discussed. However, this is not the same with water. Seldom do people say they have been taught about the importance of water, but seldom have they been taught about the importance of water as a human necessity and the current crisis in detail. By adequately providing the education on water as needed, water wastage will be greatly reduced, at least by the actions of those who care. Proper education will also play a significant role in underdeveloped countries, if people know the effects of unsafe water and what it can do to them. A major reason with these poor people in poor countries contracting water-related diseases is the fact that they do not know the dangers and the risks associated with obtaining and using unsafe water. Teaching them the necessary information they need to know to prevent them from taking whatever water they can will greatly increase their chance of protecting themselves and the loves they love.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can thus state that the situation concerning water crisis is not very bright. No matter who we claim our selves to be, where we are located in the world, and what kind of job we do, we all need water to survive. It is a necessity of life. Humans might be able to live without food for an entire month, but only a week without water. Yet people are negligent in recognizing the fact that water is running out quickly. They seem to be ignorant about the fact that someday, everyone, including themselves, will be a victim of water shortage. The fact is very simple – water is a finite natural resource and we should be more careful in its use. We simply cannot treat it as a resource that will never run out. Now imagine what would happen if water runs out. People will not be able to wash properly, causing personal hygiene problems, which can lead to diseases caused as a side-effect of not having enough water. In a desperate attempt to get hold of whatever water they can get, people will risk contracting water-related diseases, if it means they can get a gulp of water down their throat. Life will be like living in a desert with very few water to live on. Thus, finding a little bit of water, although unsafe, will become oasis to many people in the future. As to people who cannot find themselves water in the desert? They will eventually die of dehydration and thirst. Thus, as the amount of water diminishes, human beings are getting a step closer toward extinction.

At this point, many people ask the question – if population growth is one of the reasons that contribute to the water crisis, why not tell people to have fewer children? But this is not the solution to the problem at all. Telling people not to have children will not do any good, because that is also an ultimate way of survival – to pass our genes onto the next generation. The core of the problem lies in the fact that we do not know how to cherish the things we have – we dump wastes into water, waste excessive amount of water every day, do not think about the future consequences of using water thoughtlessly. We are negligent and will continue to be negligent until problems become severe in order to realize the severity. We will simply run out of things to hand down to the future generation. People must learn to treat water as an economic good. It is no longer something we get simply because we deserve it. Think of it this way – it works much like a grading system. We don’t get a grade at the end of the semester just because we deserve it by taking the class; instead, we earn the grade. If you don’t show up at class, don’t do your work, do not take notes, mess up on the exams, will you expect to get an A at the end of the semester? If you end up with a C, there is nobody to blame but yourself. The same is true with water. The time has come when we must work to get more water for ourselves. We can’t simply expect water to drop right in front of our door from the sky anymore.

It is time for the people to act. The World Bank and other organizations have commissioned studies and working groups to analyze the current conditions on water crisis and have devised plans to alleviate the problem. However, most of their projects failed simply because people have failed to acknowledge the importance of water. Soon water shortage will become everyone’s problem, not just those in underdeveloped or developing countries. Already reports of droughts across the globe can be heard almost everyday; we live our lives surrounded so much by luxuries that the thought of hunger, thirst, and inability to wash never occur to us. People in developed countries take water for granted, while people in underdeveloped and developing countries find water as a valuable natural resource. Those living without water shortage should notice that it is a problem awaiting all of us soon. It is time for all of us to act together, because water crisis is no longer a problem facing a particular country/countries; it is a problem of the entire planet.

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Religion in a Secular State: Muslims in France

Sean Stein Smith

As one turns on the television in the morning, the afternoon, or evening the following topics are the center of, and create the bulk of the conversation and speculation that is the foundation of our the various news networks: Islam, terrorism, the Middle East, and oil. However, two in particular are of significantly more importance and concern for each and every person on this planet, and those two topics are Islam and terrorism. However, the faith known as Islam is not as large a story as the people who practice and follow it: Muslims. Ever since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, public awareness and apprehension has skyrocketed in the United States in regards to the domestic Muslim population as well as Muslims worldwide. Ask a person in high school to locate Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq on a map in 1999, and, you, the questioner, would be met with blank stares and an indifferent attitude. Today those countries and the violence taking place there are centerpieces of conversation in any serious dialogue about any number of topics: terrorism, oil, trade, nuclear proliferation, in short, they are everywhere.

That being said, the United States is not the focus of this piece for a very basic reason: the number of mosques being burnt to the ground, retaliatory attacks on non-Muslims, and the overall atmosphere between Muslims and non-Muslims are not nearly as strained and are not put to the test as often as they are worldwide. At the center of Islam in the West is France; with a fast-growing Muslim population of at least 5 million people, France, with 8% of its population practicing Muslims, has the largest Islamic presence in Western Europe, and has been at the center of several integral events in the past few years.

In addition to the already sizeable segment of the population that Muslims presently constitute, the numbers of Muslims is on a substantial upward track, says Professor Brent Nelson:

Given the age spread of the Muslim population, their numbers would grow quite a bit even if immigration stopped tomorrow.¹

This refers to the fact that in each of the Western European counties that host large Muslim population, a third of that population, on average is 18 or younger: as can be seen in this example illustrated by the Pew Forum’s recent publication, An Uncertain Road: Muslims and the Future of Europe:

In Germany, for instance, fully one-third of all Muslims are under 18, compared with one-fifth of the population as a whole. And in Great Britain and Belgium, one-third of all Muslims are under 15, compared with one-fifth of the general populations of those countries.²

This brings us to back to France, its large Muslim population, and why relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims have been filled with strife as of late. Of course, clashes between Muslims and non-Muslims and an Islamic presence in Europe is nothing new: in 732, Charlemagne’s grandfather, the Frankish king Charles Martel, defeated an army of Muslims at Tours in Southwest France, preventing what would have been an inclusive domination of both Spain and France. In more recent history, hundreds of thousands of troops for the then French colony of Algeria as well as from other Francophone countries in North Africa, fought and died in World War II, but after the cessation of hostilities were denied citizenship and forced to live in urban ghettos consisting almost entirely of Muslims. If that was not enough, these veterans, who had fought the same war as the “Frenchmen,” had suffered the same injuries, and had lost just as much. They were denied the benefits and aid that were provided to the veterans from France.

This simmering cultural resentment did not prevent over 100,000 Algerians who had sided with the colonial French government and lost from fleeing to France from their homeland after Algeria succeeded in obtaining its independence from France in 1962. So, there has to be some reason why, even after being arbitrarily relegated to second-class status, having had their accomplishments overlooked and rights ignored, Muslims from North Africa and especially Algeria continue to immigrate to France in ever-increasing numbers. The reason is an easy one to understand: work. Jobs, in particular lower-tier jobs such as manufacturing or in the lower echelon of the service sector were plentiful, employers needed hard-working people, and by the 1960s the increasing economic prosperity of Europeans had rendered these jobs unattractive and distasteful to Europeans.

During this era, aptly dubbed the “economic miracle,” France’s industrial production tripled while neighbor West Germany’s increased by 600 percent. Obviously new factories, various other production facilities, as well the infrastructure that supported this expansion needed people to work in them, and with the strict labor laws restricting corporations (laws that are characterized by some of the worlds most powerful labor unions, which get for their members substantial pensions, other benefits and a short work week), labor from abroad looked, and was, a fantastic answer to this problem. Muslim populations swelled across the board in Western Europe, but a common thread ran through a significant subdivision of this overall swell: a great number of these Muslim immigrants were from North Africa and specifically Algeria. These are almost exclusively Muslim nations and almost all had been former colonial possessions of the European powers.
Even though these workers were literally putting the economies of the Western Europe on their shoulders and backs, they were not treated as such. Issued guest or worker visas and told to live in the already established Muslim ghettos, these people were regarded as a temporary fix: what is interesting though is a point revealed in the Pew Forum’s piece:

Most were seen by their host counties as guest or temporary workers who would eventually return to their homelands, a view also held by many immigrants themselves. 4

While the opinion of the host countries was fairly easy to discern, the fact that many of immigrant themselves believed that this was just a temporary arrangement is surprising: they had stable jobs, the conditions in Europe, no matter how bad the ghettos could be, were still better than back home, so this opinion in hindsight, seems to demonstrate denial by both sides on this issue. Especially confusing is that even though many of these immigrants believed that the situation was a temporary one, many of the men who had come alone eventually brought over their families and settled down as permanent residents: to this day, most Muslims who enter Europe already have family members there.

In the first decade of the 21st Century: the manufacturing sector is shrinking ever more quickly, with factories and jobs moving to China, and more and more of the low-end service jobs are being outsourced to countries such as India. This, exacerbated by a lack of education and language skills, has put the more professional jobs, such as healthcare, finance, and high technology out of the reach of recent Muslim immigrants and their families. As indicated in the Pew Forum report, An Uncertain Road: Muslims and the Future of Europe: the unemployment rate for Muslim’s in France stood at 30 percent, more than three times the country’s overall rate.

This lack of employment, discrimination, and a seemingly unsympathetic government has led to what we have today: a tense, precariously stable environment, teetering right on the edge of mushrooming into full blown civil strife. What is France doing about this? What policies has the French government introduced to help this segment of their population? And what is the public’s opinion of all of this, especially following the riots in Paris during the summer of 2005?

Both sides of this exceedingly delicate issue need to be taken into consideration if a solution can be a possibility. Following is a discussion of some of the policies enacted by the French government, the reasoning behind them, and the reaction of the Muslims population to these policies.

Closer examination of statistics detailing the plight of Muslims in modern-day France reveals more inequality, and more negative opinions directed toward the Muslim population. The European Mentoring Centre of Racism and Xenophobia’s (EUMC) report titled Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia cites several topics that have been the kindling for the firestorm of controversy surrounding this issue.

In some Member States Muslims tend to have low employment rates. Lack of success in the labour market can often be related to levels of skill and qualification, but that cannot account for all of these results. 5

This statement in the report does mention that poor education is a primary reason as to the lack of success that Muslims experience in the European marketplace, but it does not assign blame exclusively to that cause. The report does state that a lack of education cannot account for lack of results by themselves. Citing another report published by the EUMC which included a section for Muslim responses, racism and prejudice in everyday life is an everyday occurrence for Muslims in Europe:

Before September 11, we were always insulted for being Arab. Our religion was never mentioned. Since 11 September, that’s all we hear- ‘Muslim’ has become an insult. 6

Another quote, when taken with the above one, illustrates just why this attitude affects Muslims:

Respondents suggested that the extent to which Muslims face hostility, harassment or violence is also dependent on the extent to which a person’s Muslim identity is visible. 7

This statement carries great weight in France, where one of the pillars of civil society is the secular nature of the state and distinct separation of church and state. It has become a social norm that while multiculturalism is encouraged, the state does not play an active role in the assimilation of foreigners into French culture. This passive role that the state takes on this issue is obvious in the CRS Report for Congress, titled Muslims in Europe: Integration policies in Selected Countries:

France for example, rejects a quote system or any form of affirmative action for minorities in every aspect of public life; in this view, equality of rights theoretically brings equality of opportunity. 8

This is not always the case, as another quote from the aforementioned CRS study demonstrates:

Some studies find widespread discrimination against North Africans and other Muslims who seek employment in France… the proclaiming equality of rights is not sufficient to accomplish equality of opportunity. 9

The French government has its opinion that through its policy of treating all equally, equality follows. However, the results do not always match the expected outcome, as is demonstrated by the following quotes from Muslims.

These quotes were taken from the previously mentioned EUMC report on Islamophobia, and the subsection which consists of responses from Muslims in Europe. This first quote is concerning the issue of the headscarf, which the French government banned from being
worn in schools. This issue will be dealt with in a more thorough manner later, but this is at least an introduction to the controversy that this ban caused.

In France, the Government explains the ban on the veil, as a law banning all the religious symbols in the school, but what did they forbid? They forbid the wearing of the hijab! They forbid wearing some big crosses, but there are no Christians who are wearing big crosses... (Male, France).¹⁰

That above statement is the opinion of one Muslim male from France, but it is representative of the feelings of many Muslims in France, who see the ban on the headscarf as a direct attack on Muslims specifically. France’s Prime Minister Raffarin has his own reason, grounded in logic, as to why the bill was necessary, as this quote from the CRS report previously quoted explains:

[The purpose of the legislation] is to set limits in the face of growing religious militancy. ‘Some religious signs taken on a political sense and cannot be considered a religious sign,’ he said. ‘I say emphatically, religion must not be a political subject.’¹¹

Prime Minister Raffarin has good reason to be apprehensive about the growing religious militancy that is embracing Islam, especially in France. Anti-Semitic crimes committed by Muslims are on the rise as well as crimes committed against people of North African descent of Muslims. The following information on hate crimes reaffirms this fear.

France, as mentioned above, prides itself on its tradition of secularism and removal of religion from all public and government life: this limits the statistics available that specify whether a crime was religiously motivated. However, there are statistics from the DCRG (Direction Centrale des Reseignements Generaux):

As a result police databases contain only a partial account of reports where the victim’s origin or religion – as Muslim – might be noted: 131 such incidents were reported in 2004 and 65 in 2005.¹²

In addition, the CNCDH’s (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme) annual Report on Combating Racism, anti-Semitism and Xenophobia, there was a total of 352 violent acts and threats against North African or Muslims people/targets, of which 266 were threats and 4 were violent acts.¹³

With the overbearing secularism of the French nation-state refusing to acknowledge that the recent Muslim immigrants are different from any other residents and citizens of France, coupled with lack of education, high unemployment, and poverty, these hate crimes, while unfortunate, are not entirely unexpected or surprising.

With the torrent on controversy swirling around the rise in crimes committed by Muslims, the lack of equality in public life, and in the aftermath of the riots of 2005, there has been one issue that has overshadowed most others in terms of media coverage: the issue of the headscarf. Before delving into subsequent details concerning the headscarf issue, it is important to once again reiterate the extent to which secularism permeates the policies and procedures of the state of France. One pillar of this state-sponsored secularism is laïcité. As defined in the report issued by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights laïcité is:

Religious practice is discouraged in the public domain, as public manifestations of religious affiliation are considered to jeopardize the unity of the French people and to create divisions within French society.¹⁴

For decades after its establishment, this policy of laïcité posed few significant issues for the French population, as the separation of the Christian religion and the state was a widely supported initiative by the French people. This began to pose more and more problems as France’s Muslim population continued to grow larger throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s and burst into the mainstream after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. These two events: growing Muslim religiosity, and the growing resentment and hostility toward Muslims led to a reopening of this once dormant issue, which mushroomed into the controversy that has captured the attention of the French population and the world as whole: the headscarf.

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), information is presented to attempt to explain this issue and why it has created such furor on both sides. While the most recent news coverage of the headscarf issue dates to 2003, information from the first documented incident of students being expelled was in 1989: a public school in Creil expelled three Muslim students because they insisted on wearing the headscarf. That same year, the Conseil d’État concluded that the use of religious symbols by students at public schools is not incompatible with the principle of laïcité. This did not deter school officials from expelling students over the following years, but the Conseil d’État, the fore-mentioned administrative court, overruled 41 of 49 expulsions (IHF Report, 2005). After these court cases had been decided and the legal precedent firmly established, the number of expulsions dropped dramatically between the late 1990’s and 2003.

The issue of the headscarf, which grew in notoriety not only because of the growing Muslim population in France, but, in addition the establishment of a presidential commission to reconsider the application of laïcité in the French state, became a contentious, front-page news story. When the commission, dubbed the Stasi commission, issued its final report in December of 2003, the ruling was in favor of the secularist nature:

[The Stasi commission] recommended inter alia that students at public schools be prohibited from wearing "conspicuous" religious symbols, such as large Christian crosses, Islamic headscarves and Jewish skullcaps, in order to ensure respect for the principle of laïcité.¹⁵
The Stasi commission was prepared to allow more discreet symbols of religiosity to be worn in schools, such as small crosses, stars of David, and small Qurans, but the damage, as far as public relations and Muslims were concerned, was already done. Although presented as a general bill that was equally disapproving of all religions being displayed inappropriately in public, it was clear to most that the primary target of this bill was the headscarf. Critics of the bill pointed out that while it disallowed exceptionally large crosses and symbols of Jewish religiosity, people of those two faiths did not normally wear said symbols. Only the headscarf fit into the definition set forth by the Stasi commission. Now, the commission did not just arbitrarily make this decision, and their reasoning behind this recommendation will examined as follows.

First, the commission contended, the public arena must remain a culturally and religiously neutral space: in essence, by keeping the aspect of religion out of public building and institutions such as school, the commission argues that the “French” culture and identity that are part of the assimilation process for immigrants, remains firmly intact. This first argument was indeed based upon and tied to the growing perception that Muslims immigrants were not assimilating, were keeping their own cultural traditions, and were growing more militantly religious. As a corollary to the point that Muslims were retaining their own culture instead of accepting the “French” culture; the commission was concerned about the publicly publicized cases of young Muslims girls being forced to wear headscarves by their traditional, paternalistic communities. Lastly, the commission felt that this ban would help in protecting Muslims girls from oppression and safeguard their right to equality with boys.

In the firestorm of controversy that followed this ruling and the approval of it by the French president, several prominent organizations decried this ruling as discriminating against Muslims and as counterproductive to the goal of preserving French secularism in public institutions and schools. The CFCM (Conseil franco-culturel musulman) stated:

That the proposed ban appeared to target Muslims in a discriminatory manner and concluded that the ban would undermine the right of Muslims to freely practice their religion in accordance with the principle of laïcité as it had been understood till then.\(^{16}\)

In addition to the CFCM, the IHF expressed concern about the legitimacy of the law: their argument is that wearing a certain type of clothing, in this particular case a headscarf, can be a manifestation of one’s religious convictions and that the state does not have the discretion, under international human rights laws, to determine what religious symbols are appropriate to be worn in public and which ones are not. In that same vein, Human Rights Watch stated:

Unnecessary restrictions on children’s rights and freedoms should not be promoted as a means of child protection and that safeguarding the rights of students to religious freedom does undermine secularism in schools but demonstrates respect for religious diversity.\(^{17}\)

And last but most certainly not least in this conversation, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child cautioned that the law on religious symbols may be counterproductive, by neglecting the principle of the best interest of the child and the right of the child to education.\(^{18}\)

Despite the inundation of criticism and denouncements of this law, the “headscarf law” is in effect, but is going to come under review in the near future. Dozens of Muslim girls have been sent home school, expelled, and otherwise punished for not complying with this law. This has led to a surge in applications for the private Muslim schools in France, of which there are not many, a growing number of Muslim students attending Catholic schools, and a few reported instances of Muslim girls seeking refuge in Belgian schools, where the wearing of the headscarf is still allowed.

The headscarf has been “the” issue for Muslims in France since 2003, but it is not alone in being a concern for the Muslim inhabitants of France. The Pew Forum has taken a plethora of polls, analyzed the results, and those results reveal a striking number of issues and opinions that concern not just the population of France, but its Muslim population as well. Now, this article has examined the issues of the headscarf, as well as the overall plight of Muslim immigrants in France, whose complaints include discrimination in education, the workplace, and in housing accommodation, a decidedly large piece of information is left to discuss: the opinions of people on these and other various issues concerning the Muslim population in France.

A last pertinent study needs to be consulted: **Symposium: Muslims in France: A Ticking Time Bomb?** This symposium is a question and answer session including representatives from Front Page Magazine, and numerous experts and professors dealing with human rights, Islam, and French culture, just to name a few. The overall endeavor of the Q&A is to decipher and understand why Muslims feel as alienated as they do, what is being done about it, and what, according to the experts, is the future of France and its Muslim population.

A substantial cause of the resentment felt by the Muslim minority is France has to do with the lack of opportunity; Dr. Cagaptay, participant in the Symposium, agrees with this notion:

The Muslims in France are the worst integrated Muslim community in any EU country...the benign founding myth of the French state, that there are no differences between the citizens, has worked against the integration of the Muslims. On the one hand, from the very beginning, Muslims in France, already from a background of conservative—rural Islam, had few avenues towards assimilation into the metropolitan French society, and on the other, the society has acted as if these barriers do not exist.\(^{19}\)
This argument against the purely secularist nature of the French state has been used in previous movements to aid in the assimilation of various minority groups, most notably in the very recent incidents of the headscarf. Some argued, as was outlined previously, that allowing the headscarf to be worn in public institutions would in fact, not diminish the prized secularism of France, but enhance it. Dr. Cagaptay seems to be drawing a similar conclusion here as well. In addition to the lack of aid from the government in the form of assimilation assistance, the discrimination, highlighted by quotes from Muslims living in France, plays an integral role in creating the simmering resentment that permeates the French-Muslim community. Dr. Cagaptay brings this up in his response:

The banlieus of Paris, Marseilles, and other major French cities are full of disgruntled and poor North African Muslims today, who feel discriminated in the school system, in the public sector and in access to government services. The fact that the French attempts at creating “French Islam” without the critical institutions of Islam has been a failure up to the present is argued with vigor in academic circles. However, the blame cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the French state, as another respondent to the Q&A portion of the Symposium points out in the following:

[...] I checked the rostrum of my regiment: close to twenty percent had foreign surnames – all passionately wanted to become French, and did. This was not and is not the case with the preponderance of Muslim immigrants, North African and West Africans in the first place.

This is an oft-missed piece of the puzzle when this problem is presented and is attempted to be solved: what if the people truly do not want to become “French,” what is the nation supposed to pursue as a course of action? In this instance, even if the particular nation-state openly supported the integration of minority communities and urged its citizens to follow suit, persuading the unwilling population would not be an easy task. This disturbing sentiment is echoed in a survey taken by the Pew Global Attitudes project: in the survey, Muslims in several countries were asked what they see themselves as first, a Muslim or a citizen of whatever country they were residing in. France was one of the nations where this poll was conducted, 46% of Muslims considered themselves Muslims first.

By itself, that is a mildly startling fact: despite the fact that people live, work, go to school, and pay taxes for their country, they identify first with their religious beliefs above identifying themselves as citizens of their home nation. When contrasted with the same question asked of Christians in France, the true implications of this come to light: 14% of Christians polled consider themselves Christians first, citizens second. This disconnect, exhibited clearly by the French people themselves, is a major obstacle to peaceful and full integration of its Muslim minority. France prides itself on being a secular state, its Christian population follows the governments’ example, but the Muslim minority fails to follow suit. Summing up this point: there can be no meaningful progress as long as both sides refuse to compromise on this issue; a secular mindset that places the nation above all else is simply incompatible with a population that is prideful of its dedication to religion.

This summary concludes with detailing what could happen if the people of France, with their Muslim population, do not see that working together benefits both parties much more than ideological fighting ever will. Speculating on the future is fool-hardy at best, but the implications of this are important enough to warrant it. When the Dutch film artist Theo Van Gogh was murdered by a young Muslim man who felt his work was discriminatory and filled with judgmental hate directed at Muslims in the Netherlands, a very liberal, tolerant society, the backlash to this appalling murder was vengeful and swift. Mosques were firebombed, Muslims were attacked in the streets, and this all happened in a nation, as stated previously, that is known for its liberal, tolerant behavior. A similar situation could very possibly occur in France: its Muslim population is dissatisfied with its current lot, and the French government is doing little to nothing to help with assimilation. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project 87% of French citizens believe that growing Islamic identity is a bad thing, while 59% of French Muslims believe that it is a good thing. In addition, 76% of the French population is concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism in France: the Paris riots of 2005 could not have done anything but stoke these fears and apprehensions.

This is not a prediction of future events, a comprehensive dissection of the intricate and complex issue of Muslims in France or the EU at large; it is an explanation of how this problem came about, some of the more prominent issues that are exacerbating this already potentially explosive situation, and what, if anything is being done to prevent the explosion of violence that briefly bubbled to the surface in the summer of 2005. While the focus of this particular article has been on the state of Muslims in France, the state of Muslims in the European Union and the world at large is an issue of the utmost importance to all people. France can be a guide to understanding a large Muslim minority: the resources are there to improve the situation, the awareness is growing, and most importantly, public focus is bearing down on the politicians. Both front-runners from the left and the right in France are using their particular stance on immigration, and more specifically, the already present Muslim minority, as springboards to further enhance their respective candidacies.

Or, as Dr. Cagaptay says at the conclusion of his interview, by acknowledging that there are two large problems facing France in regards to its Muslim population: the lack of integration of an uneducated and resentful class of immigrants, and the ignorance that the rest of the French people assume see them through to the other side of this with no harm done.

The society, I am afraid, will be rudely awakened and will react harshly as deserved but not wisely as needed for victory—because of its lack of religious tolerance when the fundamentalist Muslims show the first signs of serious unrest or conduct terrorist attacks in France.
There are several integral items that a minority population, or any population for that matter, needs. These include legislation being passed to prevent, or to at least stem the tide of discrimination and hate crimes. In addition, to feel safe when calling the police or other authorities is paramount to the stability and eventual integration of any minority population are just a few of the issues that must be addressed.

Footnotes

7 Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from Members of Muslim Communities in the European Union.
8 CRS Report for Congress. Muslims in Europe: Integration policies in Selected Countries.
9 Muslims in Europe: Integration policies in Selected Countries.
10 Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from Members of Muslim Communities in the European Union.
11 Muslims in Europe: Integration policies in Selected Countries.
12 Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia.
13 Muslims in Europe: Discrimination and Islamophobia.
15 Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU. Developments since September 11.
16 Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU. Developments since September 11.
17 Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU. Developments since September 11.
18 Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU. Developments since September 11.
20 Symposium: Muslims in France: A Ticking Time Bomb?
21 Symposium: Muslims in France: A Ticking Time Bomb?
22 The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other.
23 The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other.
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25 Symposium: Muslims in France: A Ticking Time Bomb?

References

The Transition of Mexican Legacy into Modern Statehood

Servando Rodriguez

Mexico

Mexico is one of the oldest most advanced civilizations in the world. This region has a long history of culture and traditions - music, food and Art that are still in practice today. Historians continue to study the impacts and marvelous wonders - Architectures and paintings that each Mesoamerican civilization left behind. Following the conquest of Mesoamerica by the Spaniards, development of the Mexican state has undergone various transformations throughout the centuries. The changes have enabled Mexico to develop, yet at the same time, this nation undergoes various struggles. Mexico is a land filled with a multitude of riches-natural resources such as petroleum, copper, and silver, yet it is unable to subdue internal corruption, which is an impediment to its political and economic development. Corruption robs Mexico of its goal in achieving the world economic status of a first world nation.

Many of the problems that Mexico faces are due in large part to the colonial practices implemented by the Spaniards. Prior to its conquest, Mexico had a different system of rule that did not involve a racial system of hierarchy - Ecomienda. The coloniztion of the indigenous members created a mix of people called Mestizos (Indigenous and Spanish mix). The Mestizos along with the Spaniards established a social and economic system of hierarchy that placed the indigenous members at the bottom of the barrel. Furthermore, the corrupt practices of colonial rulers implemented an unfair system that hardwired itself into the minds of Mexicans, much like a virus.

Today, Mexico continues to struggle with various factions-politicians, cartels, business, and law enforcement-of corruption that integrate themselves in the political and economic system. In addition to the corruption, Mexico suffers from a high crime rate due to the drug cartels that took power after the demise of the Columbian Cartels. Mexico controls the largest underground market for drugs in the United States. The high demand for drugs in the U.S. coupled with a large population in poverty increases the chances of having poorer class patrons turn to drug crimes. The drug problem is so bad that is has managed to take hold of government officials by buying into their decision-making abilities through bribes and threats.

Regardless of the corruption, Mexico has managed to make tremendous leaps in its economy by recently entering the 3 trillion dollar class. Some critics say that Mexico should have achieved this goal long ago; this country has been slow to implement reform and modernize its industry. The economic gains are due in part to economic liberalization and the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The signing of NAFTA creates various economic opportunities that allow its economic sector to grow-the influx of foreign investors in the region. NAFTA is a highly controversial treaty that produces mixed feelings amongst Mexicans. Some people feel that NAFTA exploits the inhabitants of Mexico. American farm subsidies make agricultural competition difficult and only hurt the farmers in the Mexican industry. As a result, many impoverished individuals turn to the U.S. for work.

Mexico is a complex nation to comprehend, due to its long history and external factors of influence. To understand Mexico, it is necessary to dig into its history. Through the exploration of the past, implications of current issues - such as corruption and unequal treatment of classes will begin to make sense. Furthermore, by analyzing Mexico’s characteristics (territory, economy, government, society, etc.) indications of this nation’s potential will become known. Does this country have the potential to be a world power?

Territory

According to the CIA World Fact Book, the size of Mexico’s territory is approximately 736,945 square miles, which contains 31 states and 1 federal district. The large elongated size of this state allows for sufficient maneuvering space. The size of Mexico is reasonably larger than most European nations, which are typically 300-500 square miles. The size of Mexico is less than three times the size of Texas. The location of Mexico is in a strategic area, because it is located on the southern border of the United States, which is a major world power. The location also provides an ideal growing climate for crops, such as corn and grain. This country has about 9,330km of coastline on both sides of the state, which provides many opportunities for trade. The other advantage that the coastline creates is an opportunity for sea transportation and extended communication.

Natural Resources

Mexico contains various natural resources that enable substantial industrialization. These resources are as follows: Petroleum, Silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber, corn, soil, and water. These resources are easily accessible in all parts of the country. Most resources are renewable with the exception of petroleum. All of the countries resources are used for the development of Mexico.

Mexico lacks some major Natural resources that could aid in its development such as coal, molybdenum, uranium, mercury, nickel, and Iron. Although these resources are not directly available, Mexico does have access to them through trade with the United States.
Population

According to the CIA World Fact Book, Mexico has a population of 107,449,525 (July 2006 estimate) which has an even balance of male and female population. The largest degree of age population is within the ages of 15-64, which are the ideal ages for productivity in the Mexican workforce. Life expectancy is 75.41 years and the fertility for women is about two children per woman. The main regional language is Spanish, which is the second most spoken language in the world. Spanish gives Mexico a communicational advantage for regional communication. The literacy rate in the population is good, which is at 92% and usually includes the age range of 15 and up. Most of the population in Mexico is underpaid; it also has a high degree of underemployment, and inequitable income distribution. This country has few advancement opportunities for the indigenous population. The population in Mexico is relatively homogeneous and has little internal opposition. Mexico has a strong familial structure with a large percentage (89%) that practice Catholicism.

Mexican People

Mexico has a large diversity of people. The people of this nation have various backgrounds. Mestizos (Spanish/Indian), with a population of 60%, dominate the size of the population. The next largest group is the Indigenous faction, which contains 30% of the population. The indigenous people are those who have retained their ethnic identity. Coupled with pride, these people continue passing the legacy of their heritage-practicing common traditions. An assortment of Mexican ethnic foods, such as tortillas, tamales, and empanadas are derive of ancient traditions. The smallest group is European descendants 9%.

European descendants as well as Mestizos hold most of the positions of power in Mexico. This creates a base for inequality amongst the indigenous members. Indigenous people remain under represented. In the Mexican constitution, Mexico defies itself as a “pluricultural nation,” yet not much is done for its second-class citizens (indigenous people). The only way indigenous people have managed to survive, is by assimilating into the Mexican culture; by doing so, Indigenous members often forget their cultures and values. Researchers have listed the banishing of at least 139 indigenous languages. The remainder of indigenous languages is around sixty. These languages are in danger, because a few hundred people that are in rural isolation preserve them.

According to the Library of Congress, Southeastern Mexico has the highest number of indigenous members. Many of which are direct Mayan descendants that reside in the Yucatan Peninsula. They consist of approximately 1.5 million members. The region of Chiapas has a combined number of about a million Tzotzil, and Tzeltals, which are also descendants of Mayan culture. In Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero, there are about 780,000 Zapotecos, and 760,000 Mixtecs. Four hundred thousand Totonacs reside in Veracruz and Puebla. One hundred and fifty thousand Purepechas reside in Michoacan, the descendants of the pre-Hispanic Tarasco.

Widespread inequalities have provoked various rebellions by indigenous members whom are advocating for rights. The Zapatista rebels lead a campaign in early 1994; they wanted acknowledgment and fair treatment by their government. The struggle for indigenous rights has been a hefty battle. Government officials continue to deny rights and pass accords that are meager attempts for equality. Zapatista rebels continue to fight for their rights; states that have large indigenous populations will not accept the civil rights bills passed by congress. Perhaps the most recent progress that has been recently made, is the Linguistic Rights Bill enacted in 2002. This law protects and promotes indigenous languages through education and the media.

Many indigenous members of Mexico have sought refuge in larger cities, such as Mexico, Guadalajara, and Ecatepec. Likewise, a majority of individuals have immigrated north to the United States where the pay is six times higher than average wages in Mexico. Alexander Ewe, a faculty member of Cornell University, states that on average, each Mexican sends back approximately $1,000 a year to their families. The United States has about 10 million Mexican immigrants. It is estimated that another 5 million illegal immigrants reside within its boarders.

Government

The formal name of Mexico is the United Mexican States. It is a federal Republic and it has three major political parties (PAN/PRD/PRI). The legal system is a mixture of constitutional theory and a civil law system with judicial review of legislative acts. The government has three parts the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. According to the CIA World Fact Book, The Government of Mexico suffers from widespread corruption and it creates a problem relating to the obedience of laws. A good portion of the government officials are dishonest and have bloated payrolls. Government corruption creates public mistrust and that makes it difficult to inspire leadership.

Economy

The CIA World Fact book has recorded that Mexico has a free market economy, which recently entered the three trillion dollar class. It has a mixture of modern and out modeled industry such as agriculture. There is an increasing economic factor, which provides for expanding competition in seaports, railroads, telecommunications, electricity, natural gas, and airports. There is extensive trade done with the United States, Canada and most of Central America as well as Europe, since the establishment of NAFTA, trade has tripled. Per capita income is a quarter of that of the United States. The purchase power is at 1.068 trillion and it has a labor force of 43.4 million with an exchange rate at 10.998 pesos to a dollar.
Circulation
Mexico has around 40,000 phone lines and a higher increasing number of cell phones 60,000. The region has a relatively low phone density and most of the population is poorly served, but is adequate for the Government. It has a domestic satellite system as well as microwave radio relay network and fiber-optic cable and coaxial. Radio broadcasting serves about 12,000 channels and has 236 television broadcasting networks. There are a growing number of internet users, but remains low at about 20,000 users with about 3 million hosts.

The transportation system is adequate for complete internal circulation as well as access to outside the territory. Mexico has 1,832 airports, 1 major heliport, pipelines, railways (17,634 km), and 349,038 kilometers of roadways. The navigable rivers and coastline also provide adequate transportation as well as a relatively small meridian ship fleet of 38.

Military Strength
According to the CIA World Fact book, Mexico is a neutral country that is impartial when it comes to worldwide military action. The military branches include the secretariat of national defense (sedan), Army, Navy and naval marines. It has an age 18 compulsory military service requirement and a military manpower of about 25 million (ages 18-49). The overall military expenditures are at 6.07 billion, which is relatively small and inadequate for such a large force. There are also relatively small expenditures on infrastructure, technology, and equipment. Since it is on good terms with the U.S., there is a good opportunity for protection due to the location.

Foreign Relations
According to the CIA World Fact book, the nation of Mexico has problems with prolonged drought, population growth and out modeled practices with infrastructure-older facilities and industrial sectors. The border region has strained water-sharing arrangements with the United States. There is a large problem with the U.S. in regards to border relations, preventing illegal immigration of Centro American nationals and Mexicans from crossing the U.S border illegally. Mexico struggles with a large illicit drug problem that has repercussions of widespread corruption within the nation. The drug related corruption has the potential of influencing the government. Mexico also faces money-laundering issues.

Mesoamerican History

Pre-classic period (1500 BC–300 AD)

"The Formative Period begins with the first appearance of pottery and ends with the rise of the Teotihuacan and Mayan civilizations. It was an epoch marked by the emergence of effective agriculture, the establishment of human settlements and the development of fundamental arts."

Olmecs

Many historians agree that the Olmecs are the first significant civilization in Mesoamerican history. There are those who even say, “the Olmec Empire is the Mother culture of Pre-Hispanic Mexico.” The most significant achievements of the Olmecs are their intellectual developments. They have the credit of being the first Mesoamericans to develop the concept of zero. Furthermore, they also created a calendar, and a hieroglyphic writing system.

The Olmecs had a well-organized societal structure. Through their advancements in agricultural techniques, they established permanent residencies. Some of their cities are know to have the first ever conduit drainage system. A symbolic icon of the Olmec culture is the Jaguar. The Jaguar is a symbol of strength and virility to the many Olmecs that embraced its symbolic meaning. A characteristic of their sculptures is a gigantic head with a jaguar mouth. The reason for the design in their sculptures is to reflect their belief of the Olmec religion, which characterizes shamanistic shape shifting. Shamanistic shape shifting is a mystic belief that these individuals held in their civilization.

Today, most of the Olmec remains lay scattered around the Gulf coast in Veracruz and Tabasco. Most scholars continue to study the impact that this culture had on the proceeding civilizations of Mesoamerica. Archeologists concur that the Olmecs influence many of the intellectual concepts, art, and architecture of the subsequent Maya, Zapotec and Aztec cultures.

Classic Period (300–900 AD)

"Golden Age, it was an era marked by political, intellectual, and urban development, as well as excellence in monumental architecture and the creative arts. Religion was the unifying factor of Classic societies in which the sacerdotal class assumed leadership in politics, science, and culture. Cult was rendered to a complex pantheon including gods and goddesses of the sun, moon, rain, water, fire, and corn, in addition to the ubiquitous Plumed Serpent known in Nahuatl as Quetzalcoatl."

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Teotihuacán

The city of Teotihuacán is one of the world’s most impressive sites. The site is located just thirty miles from Mexico City. At the peak of this civilization, which was in 600 A.D., approximately 100-200 thousand individuals inhabited the city (Metropolitan museum of Art). The settlement began in 200 B.C. The best way to describe the city is in the form of a grid. This complex urban grid contained various multistory apartment-like structures, palaces, and pyramids. The organization of the city indicates that an elite class would oversee the development and control of the city. Furthermore, it is evident through the well-defined class structure that the elite group had high social control. The elites where responsible for various tasks amongst others, some of these were: responsible for directing city development, coordinating trade, and establishing Mesoamerican relations (with other regions).

The people of Teotihuacan had an adequate knowledge of writing and reading books. Their writing system was the bar-and-dot number system. This civilization used a 260-day calendar to keep track of time. Teotihuacan was an agricultural society; it had an adequate ability to sustain itself. A surplus in goods, gave this civilization the opportunity to trade its goods with other neighboring regions. They also relied on obsidian mining to create goods for every day use, such as weapons.

The most prominent structures of the Teotihuacan civilization are the pyramids and the palaces of the lords and priests. The pyramid of the sun is the third largest pyramid in the world. The dissipation of this civilization remains a mystery; the city was deliberately burnt and plundered (in the 7th century). Its remains continue to symbolize the raising power of the Mesoamerican civilization.

Monte Alban

The Zapotec civilization utilized the vastly rich agricultural resources in the region. Monte Albán extends through three main arms in the valley of Oaxaca. The first permanent structures where established by the Zapotecs in Monte Alban and where dedicated to public ritual. Monte Alban grew as residents gradually moved to the location, which was on elevated land. The elevated terrain gave inhabitants a peripheral view of the lands. The elevation also provided additional security to the Zapotecs within the region. In the city, individuals built an enormous ceremonial platform within the middle of the capital. Gigantic defensive walls where built along the northern and western side.

The Zapotecs had a distinctive architectural style, is marked by its base-relief sculptures of dancers. These sculptures where all over the city, which indicated the presence of the Zapotec culture. Members of this civilization had a unique social structure. Their structure consisted of kings that ruled the land, priests that would maintain social affairs, and a theocratic government. Regardless of the isolation that the city provided, Monte Albans culture and beliefs where influenced by external civilizations in the lowlands of Chiapas and the Maya. The Zapotecs eventually lost control of Monte Alban to the Mixtecs. The Mixtecs gained control of the city through marriage and warfare; once the Mixtecs had control, they converted the city into a federation of city-states.

Maya

Many intellectuals and students say that the Maya are the most brilliant civilization of the classic groups. The Maya still inhabit the Yucatan peninsula today. Their culture and language has managed to survive centuries of change. They live adjacent to other Maya groups in Belize, Guatemala, and the Mexican state of Tabasco. These people are the largest homogeneous group of Indians north of Peru.

The classic Maya lasted from 1500 BC - 900 AD. Their settlements where established close to water holes due to the harsh climate in the region. The main basis of this culture was farming. The Maya managed to cultivate many of the agricultural products we use today; some of these products include maize, beans, squash, chili peppers, cotton, and cacao. This civilization devised a complex hieroglyphic system that is yet to be deciphered. Through their extensive knowledge in mathematics and astronomy, the Maya created a precise calendar that predicted lunar patterns and eclipses. To the Maya, science and religion went hand in hand. This concept of knowledge, created an interesting dynamic in Mayan culture, because individuals where not solely reliant upon religion for answers. Religious rituals where commonly performed amongst Mayan individuals, which included baptism and human sacrifice.

The architectural style of the Maya is nothing radical or different from the other Mesoamerican styles. The Maya had pyramids, palaces, and plazas just like the other civilizations. The architectural differences where minute, but enough to distinguish themselves from others. Mayan art commonly depicts the accurate display of the human form.

The destruction of the Maya occurred through a combination of events such as insufficient food supply, earthquakes, pestilence, invasions, internal rebellions, and various other problems. Once the Spaniards arrived, the Maya had no choice but to flee their complex and organized societies. Most Mayan sites remained undiscovered until the 19th century due to their entrenchment within the dense jungles of the Yucatan peninsula.

The Post Classic Period (900-1521 AD)

“The era is marked by the shifting of political power from the priesthood to the warrior elite. In parallel, the practice of human sacrifices came to a crescendo to appease increasingly bloodthirsty gods. In addition, with the rise of these militaristic societies the object of armed conflict became more a matter of dominating subject states for the purpose of exacting tribute rather than for territorial gain.”

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Toltecs

The Toltecs were at the pivotal change of Mesoamerican history, because their era was transforming during that time. The term Toltec means any sophisticated, urban skilled people. Therefore, it is safe to say that the Toltecs achieved a level of sophistication that earned them the title. Not much is known about the Toltecs; apparently, they existed for a short period in comparison to the other empires. Regardless of what is not known, the Toltecs are accredited for growing increasingly militaristic. Their imitation and portrayal of animalistic warriors made them fearsome fighters in battle. The Toltecs are commonly associated with the Jaguar and the Eagle. Their end is assumed to be in the 12th century. Their exact demise is not known, yet it is suspected that the Chichimecas are to blame for their downfall.

Tarasco

This empire flourished from 110 A.D. to 1530 A.D. To this day, their origins are unknown, but archaeologists believe that they probably descended from South America. This is assumed, due to the similarities posed in language and pottery styles that were common in South American indigenous cultures. These people where rivals to the Aztec Empire and where in constant battles with the Aztecs.

The Tarasco are known for their unique pottery and metal working styles that where previously unknown in Mexico. Their capital city was established within Mazatlan. The city is characterized by the row of five temple pyramids, which where utilized as an administrative and religious center. The center was the lifeline for the people of Tarasco and it was commonly used as a platform from which they would wage war. Regardless of the social structure that the Toltecs had, they remained highly rural and had several settlements that extended throughout the region.

Tarasco is well known for its craftsmanship. Their skills in metal working proved to be the best in Mexico. They also cultivated various other products, such as honey, cotton, feathers, copal, salt, gold, and copper. Natural resources where highly valued by the people of Tarasco, their allure often lead them to conquer neighboring regions. Once neighboring rivals where defeated by Tarasco they where forced to pay tribute to the empire by offering resources such as gold and copper.

This Empire was so strong that the Aztecs where never able to conquer them. Fierce battles where fought amongst the two, but the Aztecs always ended up retreating, due to the extensive losses of their best warriors. In the end, Tarasco shared a similar demise to that of the Aztecs. They where defeated by Hernan Cortez instead of accepting an offer by the Aztecs to join forces and defeat the Spaniards.

Aztecs

There is no Mesoamerican culture more revered than that of the Aztecs. The power that the Aztec empire held continued to symbolize the proud heritage of Mexican ancestors. The story of how the Aztecs came to be is remarkable to say the least. The Aztecs migrated from the northern region of the American continent as nomads. They eventually settled in the marshy lands, which is now Mexico City. In fact, the story of how the empire came to be is quite symbolic to modern day Mexican culture, which is embodied on the flag. While wondering in the valley, The Aztec people observed an Eagle perched on a cactus devouring a snake. This act was interpreted as a sign by ancient tribal prophecy and symbolized the establishment of the mighty empire, Tenochtitlan.

At the beginning of the establishment, the Aztecs had to sustain themselves by acting as mercenaries for the larger more powerful empire of the Tepanecs. Once the Aztecs grew in power they where able to rebel against the mighty empire and seized power in the region. Tenochtitlan became the capital of the Aztec Empire. This city is known for its remarkable advancements in ingenuity. It had a transportation route that used canals for transportation. Market places where rampant amongst the city as crazed merchants filled the streets. The city was filled with various temples that where lavishly decorated. The Aztec Empire was a highly organized society. Their system of hierarchy included an elite ruling class. The elites where comprised of priests, merchants, and tax collectors. Warriors where highly respected in Aztec culture. The empire was constantly at war with neighboring regions for two reasons (1) to maintain the power of the empire they had to keep the empire at a constant state of war and (2) to capture prisoners for sacrifice. The Aztecs believed the world existed under the fifth sun. Therefore, the mission of the people was to keep the sun rising through the offering of human hearts.

The Aztecs forged many alliances with neighboring regions in order to increase their military strength. The Aztecs, joined forces with the Texecoco and Tlacopan in the 15th century. Once their army was beefed up, they proceeded to wage war against various tribes. By the end of their crusades, they managed to capture up to 20 thousand individuals for sacrifice. The raise in power of Montezuma the II marks the height of the empire. Montezuma the II is perhaps the most revered warrior and leader of his time. To this day, Mexicans continue to look upon the remarkable achievements of this warrior.

Spanish Conquest (1519-1521 AD)

This period marked the opening of a short but decisive chapter in Mexico’s history. The conquest of Mexico is an extraordinary story of courage, luck, and determination. It all began with rumors, Hernando Cortez heard of a mighty empire that held riches beyond anyone’s imagination. Lured by greed and a thirst for adventure, Hernando Cortez gathered a fleet of 11 ships and over 500 hundred men and horses. In 1519, Cortez set sail from Cuba and arrived on what is now Veracruz Mexico (Eastern Mexico). The Spaniards where completely outnumbered against the Aztecs, but the Spaniards had several advantages. Horses and guns where never seen on the continent before, therefore guns and horses where useful in aiding the Spaniards as instruments of shock and awe. Cortez also had inter-
interpreters that spoke Maya and Nahuatl. The ability to communicate with the natives gave the Spaniards the capability to forge alliances against the mighty Aztec empire. Perhaps the major advantage that the Spaniards had was the legend of Quetzalcoatl. The legend of Quetzalcoatl is the belief that a white God would arrive in ships and destroy their civilization.

Montezuma was well aware of the Spaniards’ arrival. While Hernan Cortez was preparing to take over Tenochtitlan, Montezuma was debating what action to take. The legend of Quetzalcoatl ultimately convinced Montezuma that the Spaniards were gods. As a result, Montezuma made a foolish decision to invite Cortez and his men to the city of Tenochtitlan. As a friendly gesture, Montezuma sent treasures of Gold and various other Aztec goods to Cortez. These offerings further wetted Cortez’s appetite for the riches within the capital.

Cortez made a decisive decision to forge an alliance with the Totonacs, which beefed up the size and power of Cortez’s military. The Spaniards where well received by the Aztecs and their emperor Montezuma. Days of lavish ceremonies where held in honor of the Spaniards. Amidst the celebrations in the city, Cortez made a risky decision to capture Montezuma and take control of the capital. Through the capture of Montezuma, the Spaniards thought they could take control of the capital without any opposition. The Aztec Chiefains staged a revolt and forced the Spaniards to retreat. Cortez lost several men that day, but his determination to conquer kept him from giving up. In the summer of 1521, Cortez recruited more troops while a small pox endemic hit the city of Tenochtitlan. Much of the population died from the small pox epidemic. Cortez and his men attacked the city of Tenochtitlan as the Aztecs valiantly defended themselves. Cuauhtémoc “Falling Eagle” was the last emperor to lead the Aztecs into battle. His remarkable fortitude in combat made him a legend. Regardless of their valiant fighting, the Aztecs where dominated by the Spaniards superior firepower and marksmanship. The Spaniards managed to defeat the Aztecs and take control of the capital three weeks after their initial attack. The collapse of the Aztec empire, lead to the downfall of Northern and Central America. This newly conquered land became New Spain.

The Colonial Era (1535–1821)

This was a period of corruption, that saw the establishment of the Ecomienda system. The Spaniards built their colony above the ruins of the Aztec Capitol. They did this to demonstrate power and control over the native people. From the period of 1535 – 1821, New Spain had over sixty Spanish viceroys. Their constant replacement was due to the massive corruption problem that Spain was unable to control. The main purpose of the Spaniards conquest was motivated by the spread of Christianity. The integration of Christianity into the Natives beliefs was a relatively smooth process. Most Natives where willing to embrace the new fundamental ideas introduced by the Spaniards. The Spaniards utilized the Natives superior craftsmanship skills to develop many of the colonial structures that Mexico has today.

Spain implemented the “Ecomienda system,” which was a system of hierarchy. The system granted large pieces of land to Spanish nobles, priests, and soldiers. Native Americanes effectively became the laboring class. This system introduced an unequal social class system; members of European descent where the elite, followed by the Mestizos and then the Native Americans. Mexican Natives where unhappy with the system, because of the inequalities that where imposed against the majority of underclass members. Ties with Spain became severed in the early 19th century. Criollos where tired of the corruption that Peninsulares “Spaniards directly descended from Spain” had created and the resentment sparked a rebellion against Spanish rule.

Mexican Independence (1822–1917)

In this period, Mexicans grew tired of Spanish rule and declared independence. Mexico won its Independence from Spain for several reasons amongst others. During the 1700’s, Spain over expanded its empire, which gave it more of a loose ended control of its colonies. The Criollo resentment of Spain evoked Mexican nationalism and drove the Mexicans for independence. The recent revolutions that took place in the United States, France, and Haiti also influenced Mexico on its desire to be free. France conquered Spain in 1808 through the efforts of Napoleon Bonaparte. The French supported the Criollos in overthrowing the Spanish colonial government. French intervention hoped that the newly independent country would make one of their French leaders king.

On September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo declared Independence from Spain. The declaration for independence marked the beginning of the Mexican war for independence. The war went on for 11 years, until Mexico signed a treaty in 1821 that declared its independence from Spain. The declaration of independence called for the formation of a constitutional monarchy. However, the monarchy failed, and instead, a republic took form in 1822. The republic came into force in 1824, making Mexico an official independent state.

Post Mexican Independence (1833–1917)

This period in history is marked with several struggles for control of the capital as well as tragic loses in its territorial size. Following Mexico’s Independence, General Augustin de Iturbide became Emperor of Mexico from 1822-1823. General Iuribide used his military power including the defeat of the Spaniards to take rule of the nation. General Antonio Lopez hastily replaced Iturbide, because of his unlawful ruling practices. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana came to be a dominant force in Mexican politics from 1833-1835. Regardless of Santa Ana’s low popularity, he was able to maintain an iron grasp in the political arena, which allowed him to act as he pleased. In 1834, a year after Santa Ana took power, the Mexican Federal Republic collapsed. During the collapse, Mexico went to war on three separate occasions. By the end of the period, Mexico had lost almost half of its territory through military defeat or through sale. Mexico sold some of its territory resulting from fiscal inefficiencies.
During the 1840’s, conflict arose with Texas, and in 1846, Texas gained its independence from Mexico. Mexico went to war with the United States from 1846-1848 over border disputes. The result of the Mexican/American conflict was a loss of even more territory. In 1848, the Rio Grande became a fixed boundary between Texas and the United States. The Gladstone purchase of 1853 was an agreement made between the United States and Mexico, which established official boundaries between the two. In the Gladstone purchase, the United States purchased several key territories of land from Mexico at a relatively low price; the result was a decrease in Mexico’s size.

Following years of corruption and frustration with the elite class of Mexico, the liberal society staged a revolt in 1854. The revolt was induced by the ever-lasting power struggle between conservative elites and working class liberals. Benito Juárez emerged as an influential and prominent leader to the liberals in the revolt. The liberal’s main intent was to demand for equal rights in the democratic process. The liberals lead a successful movement that put Benito Juárez in power as the New Mexican leader from 1858-1871. Various disgruntled Mexicans continued to push for new leadership pursuant to Juárez’s rule, because of the continued inequalities. As a result, Mexico went into civil war against nations that wanted to overthrow Juárez and his regime. The resulting consequences of civil war lead to tremendous amounts of foreign debt. Due to its inability to repay the debt, the Spanish, British and French took control of Mexico until the balance was paid. The Spanish and British eventually withdrew their troops, but France remained an occupier of Mexico. Maximilian was the French ruler who controlled Mexico during its occupation. In 1867, Mexicans staged a revolt against Maximillian and his troops in the town of Puebla and successfully defeated the French.

Following the defeat of the French, there was a power vacuum in the leadership of Mexico. In 1872, Porfirio Diaz led numerous insurrections that eventually led to his leadership from 1877-1911. Once again, the leadership of Diaz was one of elitist character. His economic policies favored the elite class and greatly affected the Native American society by displacing their lands. Mexico became entrenched in economic turmoil coupled with various forms of inequalities during the period of 1910-1920. The inequalities where directed towards the natives, which induced another revolution. The Native Americans struggle for rights resulted in the restoration of communal lands for natives in 1917 under the “eljido” system, which implemented nationalist measures in government policies. The most prominent leaders in this era are Francisco I. Madero, Venustiano Carranza, Pancho Villa, Avaro Obregon, Victoriano Huerta, and Emiliano Zapata.

**Political and Economic Conditions in the 20th Century (1929–2006)**

The PRI party dominated politics for 70 years. In 2000, elections overturn the single party rule, in favor of PAN. The 20th century marks the political dominance of the single party rule. In 1929, subsequent to the chaos of multiple revolutions, various interest groups collectively formed the (PNR) party, which stands for Partido Revolucionario. PNR would later become PRI, the party had a 70-year reign over Mexican politics. The PRI party was designed for power and control. The success of PRI in politics was due in part to the absence of a specific ideology. Therefore, PRI was able to adapt to social, economic, and political issues. The party attached itself to labor unions, civic interest groups, and peasant groups. In 1934, PRI enacted the socialist program that was geared towards economics. Lizardo Cardenas, the leader of the party, enacted various social programs that where focused on welfare and education.

Mexico nationalized its oil in 1938 in order to prevent the intervention of American and British oil companies in its industry. By 1939, a secondary political opposition group was established. The party (PAN) National Action Party intended to cater to demands of the business class. Manuel Avila Camacho was elected President of Mexico in 1940 and is considered more conservative than his predecessor. Camacho, established friendly relations with the United States and supported the US during World War 2.

After World War II, President Miguel Aleman Valdes (1946-1952) situated a protectionist wall around the economy of Mexico. The purpose of this economic wall was to attract domestic and foreign manufacturers in order to prevent agricultural and petrol dependency. Furthermore, it implemented the import substitution model, which undervalued the currency, tax concessions, low interest loans, in expensive energy and various other economic incentives aimed at spurring economic growth. President Valdes also established labor-intensive manufacturing plants (maquiladoras) that manufactured products, which where exported to the United States. Due to the implementation of the economic programs, Mexico experienced a 6% economic growth rate between the period of 1955-1971; economists called this success an economic miracle. By 1968, the economic growth of Mexico lost its steam and began to regress into stagnation due to isolation of competition. The discovery of oil in Mid Eastern Mexico could not have happened at a better time, the petrol effectively allowed Mexico to recover from recession. Between the periods of 1978 – 1981 Mexico’s economy grew on an average of 8.4% a day. The discovery of this black gold was both a blessing and a curse, because it enabled the Mexican economy to expand, but it also lead to rampant corruption in its bureaucracy. The corrupt bureaucratic practices in Mexico caused Mexico to default on its loans that had accrued massive debt; as a result, the IMF became involved.

Following the presidency of Valdes, President Miguel de Madrid initiated a strategy to phase out government subsidies and sold off government companies. During this time, Mexico curbed the growth of its bureaucracy to a sustainable level. Mexico initiated talks in the trade round negotiations of GATT in 1968, and became a member of the WTO in 1995. Under the leadership of President Salinas, he negotiated the possibilities of free trade with the United States and Canada. In 1994, Mexico became a member of (NAFTA) North American Free Trade Agreement. Around the same time that Mexico signed NAFTA, it also experienced a terrible economic collapse, similar to the great depression of the United States. The collapse occurred because of the overvaluing of its currency, as well as the
soaring interest rates, which effectively wiped out the savings of the Mexican middle class. Mexico was in economic turmoil and needed help fast. Bill Clinton, the IMF, and various European Nations assisted Mexico by providing aid and advice to speed up its recovery.45

There came a point in Mexican history where individuals became frustrated with the level of inefficiencies and corruption caused by the PRI party. This level of frustration, lead to the loss of the PRI majority in the House of Representatives in 1997. Pan effectively won the National election, which gave Vicente Fox the presidency. At last, Mexico achieved democratic victory after 70 years of single party domination. Otherwise, known as the Marlboro man, Vicente Fox was recognized for his 6 foot 5 inch height and stunning good looks, Fox became the symbol for change in democracy for Mexico.46 Before the election of PAN, Mexican individuals used to joke about the democracy in Mexico, by saying that it was democratic 364 days of the year, except for Election Day.47

Pressed for change, Fox promised various things amongst others. Fox promised to increase the economic growth by 7%, create 1 million jobs annually, boost oil production, clean up corruption, reform the judiciary system, eradicate poverty, clean the environment, and improve social service quality.48 By 2003, Fox became a lame duck. This EX CEO of Coca Cola was seemingly incapable of handling the extensive amounts of political knots created by the previous party. Foxes efforts to implement change where withered by the fact that the PRI party gained the house majority in the following elections. PRI was demonstrating that it was still the most organized party in the nation. Fox made several mistakes; he created resentment amongst members of his party by electing loyalists from his state instead of his campaign supporters. Furthermore, he caused popular disapproval from his party due to certain choices that where made, such as welcoming the Zapatistas in Mexico in 2001. Fox is criticized for being inconsistent with staying on track with issues. Every month, Fox and his administration switched from one priority to the other. By 2004, frustrated Mexicans led to the streets of Mexico City in protest for change.

Mexico Today

2006 Political Elections

In mid 2006, Mexico was preparing for the next Presidential election - the main Presidential contenders where leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the center-right Felipe Calderon and Roberto Madrazo of Institutional Revolutionary Party. Each candidate had a unique background of experience and had their own ideas of how to approach the ongoing political conditions in Mexico. In fact, the hot topic was the economy and job creation. The concern was so big, that the nation had almost an equal split, between the pro business conservative class and the poor leftist class. Calderon, the PAN candidate, had once served as Energy Minister and held a free market orientation. As a Harvard graduate, Calderon had the North American perspective of the Mexican economy - increase global economic integration, foreign investment and stimulate local business.49 Lopez Obrador, a former mayor of Mexico City, commanded popular support among impoverished segments of Mexican society because of his support of public programs as well as his calls for poverty alleviation. Meanwhile, Roberto Madrazo was interested in restoring the PRI party to its original state. The elections of 2006 would prove that Mexicans where not ready to go back to the way things where.

On Election Day, the polls showed a close tie between Felipe Calderon and Manuel Lopez Obrador. Upon the closing of the polls reports where quickly indicating that the results where too close to declare. The inability to declare a presidential winner did not keep both candidates from declaring victory after hearing misinterpreted rumors of leads in the voting count. Both Obrador and Calderon declared on national TV that they where the winners, but the results where not even out yet. By July 4, 2006, preliminary results issued by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) showed Calderon with 36.38 percent of the vote and Lopez Obrador with 35.34 percent.50 Calderon declared immediate victory upon the notice of the official count, yet Obrador was unhappy with the results due to the close margin. He went even further by declaring that the results were illegitimate and that the election was stolen from him. Obrador demanded a recount. The recounted delayed the process of declaring Mexico’s President, yet the recount indicated a marginal victory for Felipe Calderon. In the end, Calderon of the ruling National Action Party won 35.88 percent of the vote — less than one percent more than the 35.31 percent for Lopez Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution.

Implications of 2006 Political Elections

The result of the 2006 presidential election indicated various factors amongst others. The close split of political ties demonstrates a national divide, much like the 2004 United States election between conservatives and liberals. The election results did not please Lopez Obrador who promised to continue to fight for “democracy” until he gains his so-called democratic justice. His massive appeal to the poor masses gave him the ability to organize massive protests in Mexico City at the Zocalo (Mexico’s capital). Many individuals where worried that Obrador’s actions would cause mistrust in the Mexican political system, which would lead to instability. As a result, Calderon had to play it safe when entering leadership. Calderon attempted a neutral approach in his first days in office. His aim was to unite party members to make progress in his political agenda. The slight victory of the Pan party will not give the party 2/3rds majority due to the split of seats between PRD and PRI.51 This uneven distribution of seats indicates the Calderon and his party will not have it easy when trying to push for his economic reform agenda, which includes plans to modernize the much-needed PEMEX national oil company. The PAN party will have to broker between the socialist demands of the PRD party in order to achieve enough votes in legislature to attain its economic goals. Out of the three candidates, Calderon is probably the most capable leader to handle economic devel-
opment in Mexico as well as to curb the massive corruption still entrenched within all aspects of Mexico. Calderon will have to fight an uphill battle, which will encounter great challenges ahead.

**Mexican American Relations**

Mexican/American relations are strained. American pressure for Mexico to conduct immediate reforms on drug crimes and illegal immigration are frustrating. Mexico lacks the resources to do so. Meanwhile, America is not assisting Mexico enough. Since both countries are neighbors, the problems of Mexico become the problems of the United States. The United States could do more to help Mexico in assisting to improve its law enforcement. By working with Mexican law enforcement, America could teach this nation how to crack down on organized crime. The US has plenty of experience in this field. It would be in its interest to do so, because there are many American investors in Mexico and their protection is crucial. Furthermore, combating drug crimes starts with the U.S... America is the largest consumer of illicit drugs, which creates a great incentive for underground crime in Mexico to meet those demands.

Strained boarder relations dealing with illegal immigration is another problem for both Nations. Mexico needs to reform its industries by providing adequate pay-enough for its citizens to stay. In order for this to happen, economic reform will depend on its regional trade agreement NAFTA. NAFTA is a crucial agreement for the North American Block. The United States relies heavily on the cheap labor from impoverished Mexicans to stay competitive in the global market against China and India. Therefore, the illegal immigration problem is not so much of a problem for the U.S., considering that it was a part of the agreement. Following 911, the U.S. turned its back on Mexico and shifted its foreign policy, which put the issue of border security as a national issue. Meanwhile, those illegal immigrants that where enticed to migrate are now in the spotlight. The illegal immigration of Mexicans is viewed as a problem deriving from Mexico, but that is far from true. The American labor demand for low paying jobs created that incentive in the first place.

Mexico should take a more proactive approach to protecting several key elements in its industry. It is simply not acting aggressively enough to protect its own interests. In January 2008, NAFTA will implement another step into the free trade agreement. Key staples such as beans and corn will become a free trade commodity. How will Mexican farmers be able to compete against American subsidized farmers? Perhaps Mexico should reevaluate some of its agreements in efforts to protect its own people. Overall, Mexican/American relations are not bad, but require improvements. It is surprising to see that the United States does not actively purse initiatives to help Mexico reform. Mexican reform could help strengthen the North American block, which would increase economic competition between the EU and Asia.

**Final Thoughts**

**Does Mexico Have the Potential to Be a World Power?**

When studying all of the major factors that determine a countries power, it is quite evident that Mexico has the capacity to be a major world power. The location is prime, resources are abundant, foreign relations are good, the population is sufficiently educated and primed for work. The extensive communication network is reliable enough for this nation to expand and industrialize its infrastructure. The downside to Mexico is its uneven wage distribution and widespread government corruption. The eradication of drug related crimes are a crucial factor that will determine Mexico's future economic and political success. Furthermore, inequalities of ethnic differences create an unequal social structure that keeps the economic system unbalanced. Through the eradication of the ethnic divide, the poor in Mexico’s economy would have a better chance of escaping poverty. Many of the poor indigenous members that reside in the poorer regions of Mexico such as Chiapas lack infrastructure- roads, power lines, irrigation, and plumbing. Education should be another priority that does not receive enough precedence from politicians. Many of the Politicians in Mexico are more concerned with their own economic gains, which effectively create an inefficient government-incapable of improving social, political and economic conditions. Mexico has the potential do be a major world power if it where to improve poverty levels (small middle class). The next few years will be crucial to Mexico's development and will determine whether Mexico is capable of competing in a global world. In today's global world, foreign economies are more competitive than ever. Therefore, Mexico should reanalyze its position and improve its relation to the world in order to make wiser economic decisions.

**The Challenges Ahead: Reform**

The Political divide within Mexico keeps this state from progressing. Politicians cannot agree on any type of reform, which makes Mexico’s development slow. Politics in Mexico are a battle of ideas that cannot come together. This poses a serious problem for the state. On a local level, crime rates are up; local law enforcement is incapable of curving crime. This is due to the inadequate funding and training of its police force. Instead, Mexico’s law enforcement agencies often turn to crime, working closely with major drug cartels. In Mexico City, kidnappings for ransom are a common enigma. Therefore, it is common to see prominent Mexican individuals with bodyguards as a necessity. In the Job market, impoverished individuals are unable to escape the harsh realities of poverty. Faced with an ultimatum, these primarily indigenous members often turn to crime or try to flee the country illegally into the United States. As a result, Mexican institutions are proving that they are seemingly incapable of dealing with these problems.

Mexico is falling behind the global market. Cheap labor and increasing technological developments in India and China make global competitiveness even more difficult to overcome. Mexico relies heavily on its volatile petroleum revenues, which are beginning to fal-
ter, due to decreasing production. The investment in human capital is relatively low, which puts Mexico's labor force at odds with the Global markets. The unfortunate reality is that Mexico lacks the infrastructure to provide adequate education to all of its constituencies. Low funding is due in part to the poor tax collecting habits, which provide little revenue for the government to target issues relating to education. Instead, the petrol revenue is used. There is a dire need for Mexico to reform its tax collection capabilities. However, politicians in the capital cannot seem to come to terms on the appropriate method for reform.

If Mexico wants to remain competitive, it has to move quickly and use its resources wisely. It would not hurt Mexico if it invests some of its capital gained from petrol profits into technological development. Furthermore, Mexico should not rely solely on the United States for aid and support. Its neutral approach to world politics puts Mexico under the radar and allows for various economic ties with other nations to pass. Mexico could just as easily progress its foreign relations with the South American economies, which would provide greater economic opportunities.

**Mexican Legacy Continues**

Regardless of Mexico's struggles, its strength comes from a strong sense of nationalism with in the country. Mexicans are proud to identify themselves with their ethnic heritage. This delight is due to the historical lineage of the Mesoamerican history. The devotion that individuals have to this Nation State is strong. The World Cup is a perfect example of how devoted Mexicans are to their team, which symbolizes national pride. Although there is much room for improvement, we must not neglect the progress that Mexico has made. Mexico's recent political reforms, which were made in the last decade, are remarkable. Furthermore, it has an adequate social system that provides affordable health care and jobs that grant basic necessities to survive.

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